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PATRICK ARCHER
("mac finegall")

The Humours of Shanwalla

BY

PATRICK ARCHER

("mac fíneḡall")

Dublin

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INTRODUCTION.



YEARS have elapsed since, on a beautiful May morning, the author of this little work left his home in Shanwalla and, journeying up the "Dublin road," commenced that portion of his career which was destined to be spent in English towns and cities.

But, though long separated from his native place, his thoughts, in leisure moments, have frequently been with the past, and he has found much pleasure in recalling the peculiar characteristics of friends and neighbours left behind, and has, in lonely hours of exile, again laughed over some of the humorous episodes in Shanwalla's history.

Frequent reflection on the subject eventually engendered the idea in the writer's brain that here was material for short stories and sketches of rural life in Ireland, as good, perhaps, as could be found elsewhere, and if he only had the ability to properly transmit them

to paper, and find a publisher, they would serve as a strong link between himself and the old home, and might possibly in time come to be regarded as "a credit to the little village."

And so they have been written. The endeavour has been to avoid all artificiality in writing them.

The language put into the mouths of the characters is the language used by the people of the district, as well as it can be phonetically rendered, and no attempt has been made to follow the wonderful orthography of some of those famous writers who find a necessity for writing "shure" instead of "sure" (both words being pronounced alike), "praste" for "priest," and "belave" for "believe."

What particular position Shanwalla occupies upon the map of Ireland the author does not feel called upon to point out, as he has no wish to hurt the feelings of some of the present residents by daring to hint that there are people alive who are ignorant of the geographical position of a place of such importance—said importance being estimated by the aforesaid residents.

There are, however, many such villages

throughout Ireland wherein little episodes similar to those described in this volume are of frequent occurrence, and, therefore, Shanwalla may be taken as representative of more than itself.

And now, having said so much, the author, who always believed in short introductions, begs to conclude this one, venturing to express the hope that his labour has not been quite in vain, and that many of his compatriots at home and abroad may be able to find—as he has found—some pleasure in “The Humours of Shanwalla.”



Right over me on the bank he stood

THE GENERAL.

WHEN or where he was born I have not been able to discover. It is sufficient to know he existed. His first settled place of abode was in Shanwalla parish, at Morans' of Knockdara to be precise, and there it was I made his acquaintance.

Our meeting came about in this wise. At the back of Morans' haggard, and overhanging the duck-pond, flourished a wild cherry-tree, the fruit of which in season was sought with much persistence by the gossoons* of Shanwalla and the neighbourhood.

The Widow Moran and her son Phelim, having respectively reached the ages of eighty-four and fifty-five, troubled very little concerning the fruit of the cherry-tree, but the latter troubled enough, and to spare, over broken hedges and trampled crops, and so it was that the youthful excursionists who sought the luxuries of Morans' cherry-tree were in turn and quite as persistently sought for by the "Widow's Phelim," as the heir-apparent of Knockdara was occasionally called.

One summer's evening in a weak moment

* Gossoons = Boys.

I formed the daring project of an unsupported attack upon the cherry-tree, and having crawled half a mile or so through fields and ditches in what I considered the most approved Red Indian fashion I reached my goal without hap or hindrance.

I was soon among the branches of the forbidden tree, and having for the space of a glorious half hour revelled in my surroundings, I essayed my descent, feeling exceedingly well pleased with myself, Phelim Moran, his mother, and the world at large.

My happiness, alas! was destined to be short-lived, for at the very moment I reached *terra firma* I chanced to look towards the haggard, where, to my consternation, I saw Phelim's hat and portion of his head appearing above the hedge which bounded the duck-pond upon the haggard side.

I was upon my hands and knees in an instant, carefully crawling by the brink of the pool, my gaze fixed on the hedge which screened me from Phelim, and ready to rise and run for it should I be discovered.

At this juncture the General introduced himself.

It may be remarked that his method of doing so was not quite in accordance with the usages of polite society.

For one brief moment I imagined I was being taken charge of by a typhoon or an earthquake, and the next, I found myself engaged in a close investigation of the rich

layer of mud which covered the bottom of Morans' duck-pond. A hurried examination sufficed, but thinking it better to have my feet down I managed, with a struggle, to effect a change of posture which brought my head and shoulders above the surface of the water.

It was from this standpoint I first viewed the General.

Having first rid my eyes of a fairly generous supply of rich black mud, I took a long, hard look at him who was the cause of my misfortune.

Right over me on the bank he stood, his long grey beard almost touching the grass as he bent forward with mischievously-glinting eyes to mark the effect of what he evidently imagined to have been a brilliantly-executed manœuvre.

Phelim, having heard the splash indicative of my rather hurried retreat from the General's fierce charge, came to my assistance, and having delivered me from the duck-pond and my assailant, held me at arm's length, and laughed till I thought—and was almost savage enough to wish—he would shake to pieces.

"That's to larn you, me bould hayro," said he, when he had laughed sufficiently, "not to be comin' here thryin' to sarcumvent daicint people! Away wid yeh home now as fast as yeh can put legs to ground, an' don't let me ketch yeh here again or it'll be worse for yeh." And having released me

and applied his foot as an aid to my locomotion, it goes without saying I lingered not upon the scene of my humiliation.

Such was my first *recontre* with the general, and from thenceforward I respected him.

This respect was not, however, the kindly feeling begotten of affection. But let that pass. "Mick the Sodger" owned him first. Mick was a poor, half-witted fellow who rambled about from one farm-house to another, telling of his adventures on many a fierce battle-field, and existing on the charity of the kindly-hearted people among whom he sojourned.

In his younger days Mick had fought under Meagher in the American Civil War, but having had his skull fractured in one of those hot actions where our brave countrymen proved themselves worthy sons of a soldier race, poor Mick left hospital an altered man, and came back to his native country with an impaired intellect and a weakened constitution.

Somewhere in his ramblings Mick had met with a farmer who in fun offered him a young goat, and Mick, having accepted the gift, succeeded in rearing—the General.

The pair in time came to be well known throughout many a barony of Fingall and Royal Meath, and there was something pathetic in the simplicity of the battle-scarred veteran marching over the roads and

boreens in the dust of summer and 'mid snows of winter, discoursing of hollow squares, broken columns, roaring guns, and charging squadrons, to his faithful and silently appreciative companion, the General.

Whatever possessed Mick to bestow a masculine appellation upon a feminine subject nobody could understand, but, whatever his reason, he never referred to his pet but as one of the sterner sex, and, furthermore, he insisted on others following his example.

Eight or nine days previous to the cherry-tree incident Mick and the General had rambled up the Knockdara boreen at the close of a glorious summer's evening.

As they passed between the blossom-laden hedges Mick halted, and rested upon his stick more than once. His poor head was light and his heart was heavy. There were dark shadows passing before his eyes which were not of the clouds; his feet were sore, his limbs weary, and when at last he reached the friendly barn where he was wont to rest he sank exhausted on his bed of fresh straw, and was soon in a heavy sleep.

Outside in the paddock the General regaled himself on the sweet grass of Knockdara, and having, doubtless, given all the news of the neighbourhood to his companions—two pet lambs and a donkey—he lay down with them in a sheltered corner and slept the sleep of the just.

The General was astir with the first streaks

of dawn, but the sun had risen high over Kinoud Hill ere the barn door was opened.

The creaking of the hinges put the General on the alert immediately, but he was disappointed to observe that the noise was made by Phelim Moran, who passed in with an empty *dhulawn** in his hand.

Presently Phelim emerges from the barn, the *dhulawn* in his hand still empty, and rushes back to the farm-house, leaving the barn-door ajar.

The General avails himself of the opportunity and enters.

He will bleat a reveille to his sleeping master. Ah! General, you are late! The old soldier hears not your call. You will never march by his side again. The weary feet are at rest in a camp to which you may not follow. The battle was brief. Death conquered. "Mick the Sodger" has answered the roll-call from above.

* * * * *

The veteran was buried, and the General remained at Knockdara as part and parcel of the out-door establishment. For a few days he moped about in a most disconsolate fashion, but the melancholy gradually wore away, and, becoming reconciled to his new mode of life, he began to assert himself.

He commenced with me, and carried out his programme so successfully that in six

* *Dhulawn* = A measure for corn, a "blind sieve."

months' time he was "monarch of all he surveyed" on the Knockdara premises.

Having succeeded in subjugating his fellow-inhabitants of the farmyard, ambition led the General further afield, and being thoroughly conversant with the features of the surrounding country he soon mapped out his first important campaign.

A favourable day was selected for the commencement of operations, and, placing himself at the head of Mrs. Moran's two pet lambs and an unsophisticated "slip of a pig," he marched upon Paddy Morrissey's cabbage garden, which he successfully carried and occupied in the face of many difficulties.

It was a never-to-be-forgotten sight that evening when the General made the return march to Knockdara at the head of his troop, the light of victory in his eyes, and about a dozen heads of Paddy Morrissey's best white cabbage in his stomach.

Next morning Paddy Morrissey was up "hot foot" at Knockdara bewailing the manner in which his little garden had been laid waste, and bemoaning the fate of his old collie Bran, whom the General had left for dead among the cabbage stalks.

Phelim promised to langle the chief raider and keep him within bounds, but contented himself with confining him to the orchard, which was so well walled in that there was no chance of escape.

Jack Casey, the servant boy, wanted right

or wrong to have the General tethered to an old fifty-six pounds weight, but Phelim, knowing that Casey had a spite against the General, would not consent to a punishment more severe than confinement to the orchard.

Some months previously the General had unduly interfered with Casey's work, and because of this interference the latter nourished a spite against him.

One day, when Casey had finished branding some sheep in the corner of the bawn, he thought he might as well decorate the two pet lambs as "his hand was in." After a short chase he succeeded in capturing one of the lambs, which, despite its protestations, he dragged to the corner where stood the tar-pot. At that particular moment the General, unobserved by Casey, sauntered into the bawn, and, taking in the position at a glance, immediately decided it was his duty to free the struggling captive.

The moment was favourable for a surprise. Jack was bending over the lamb, close by the tar-pot, and quite oblivious of the danger which threatened his rear.

The General marched up quite close to the enemy, and, having carefully reconnoitred the position, retired a few paces in order to gather the momentum necessary for a successful charge.

Then, with a skip and a bound, he was on the foe, and when a few moments later Jack Casey disengaged his head from the interior

of the tar-pot he looked "more like a nigger nor a daicint sarvint boy," as Mrs. Moran herself said.

Thus it was that Casey learned to entertain a spite against the General.

After being confined in the orchard for the best part of a month the General was again allowed "the run o' the place," as Phelim wanted to put two young calves in the orchard, and not caring to run the risk of having their morals corrupted by the company of the raider, and seeing he was apparently penitent and bent on leading a more exemplary life, the soldier's pet emerged from within his prison walls and basked in freedom's sunlight again.

It was about this time that Phelim—after twenty years of vain petitioning—obtained his mother's consent to bring in a wife. Fearing the maternal mind might change he lost no time in availing himself of the permission given, and soon preparations for the home-coming of the new Mrs. Moran were in full swing.

The first stages of the work of renovation interested the General very little, but when the business assumed a greater magnitude he seemed to wake up to the fact that a change of some importance was impending, and forthwith commenced a series of searching investigations. He constituted himself inspector of the works, so to speak, and stalked about with an air of responsibility, sniffing at

new doors and windows, rubbing his sides against freshly-painted gates, and testing the quality of the newly-plastered walls with his long horns. As a result of these investigations it was quite apparent to anyone who took the trouble to observe him that the General was becoming dissatisfied and suspicious. As the work proceeded he manifested his disapproval in various ways, and became so morose and ill-tempered that the two pet lambs, "Keeper" the dog, and the pigs dared not cross his path. He had long and frequent fits of abstraction, and no doubt abandoned himself to bitter reflections regarding these alterations, the completion of which might, perhaps, mean the lessening of his authority in the farmyard of Knockdara.

Such was the General's mental condition when Phelim came home one evening from an auction with a cartload of the finest furniture that had ever been seen in the townland.

Phelim was well pleased with the majority of the articles he had purchased, but there was one particular item concerning which he had misgivings, and, as he said himself, he was more than half afraid his mother would fly at him for having bought it. This was a beautiful boudoir mirror which Phelim, in his excitement, had run up to a good price ere he secured it. The moment after it was knocked down to him he regretted his last bid for the reason stated, and because, as he afterwards dolorously informed Jack Casey,

he "was fool enough to pay the price ov a load o' hay for it when wan o' them three-an'-sixpenny wans you could get in Dublin would a' done just as well."

As a set-off to his forebodings, Phelim tried to comfort himself with pleasanter reflections regarding the glad surprise of the future Mrs. Moran when she came to find herself mistress of such a splendid piece of furniture, and the delight she would experience in being able to dress before a mirror in which she could see herself from top to toe, and with such thoughts coursing through his brain Phelim arrived with his load of furniture at Knockdara.

Mrs. Moran, when the furniture arrived was in the paddock on the trail of a hen that was "laying out," and such being the case the mirror came not beneath her notice at the moment of arrival, a circumstance which gave Phelim no little relief, as thereby he escaped the chance of a scolding in public for having bought such an article.

While the various pieces of furniture were being lifted from the cart the General held aloof, as if to show his supreme contempt for the whole proceeding, but when each article had been placed upon the ground and the work of transferring them to the interior commenced, he slowly approached the scene of operations in his most nonchalant manner and with such a semblance of complete indifference as would lend the casual observer

to imagine he was quite oblivious of his surroundings.

As he approached the first article—a mahogany sideboard—was being conveyed into the house, and Phelim and his helpers were giving all their attention to its safe transmission—for Phelim Moran, be it observed, was a most careful man.

Slowly the General approaches, casting from time to time covert glances at the remaining articles of furniture.

Suddenly he stops. He now sees something he had not previously noticed. His air of indifference is gone, and a tremor of rage passes through him. His eyes flash fire, and his nostrils dilate with anger, for there, in the midst of the furniture, by the door of the house, and on the premises where he has held undisputed sway, stands another goat staring at him as impudently as ever usurper stared.

This was the last straw. Was ever such effrontery witnessed? Here! Here in Morans' yard at Knockdara, come to beard the lion in his den—but enough, the invader must die.

A snort of angry defiance, a proud arching of the tough old General's neck, and forward rushed the hero of many a fight.

A terrific crash, a woman's scream, and the rattle of falling glass, bring Phelim to the door just in time to see the General extricate himself from the ruins of the boudoir mirror, and, rushing past Mrs. Moran (who has re-

turned from the paddock), dash down the boreen at a mad gallop, never to be seen at Knockdara again.

Of the *conversation* which ensued between the Widow Moran and her son it would be idle to attempt giving the details. On the whole it is, perhaps, better to leave it unrecorded.

Where the "warrior" disappeared to no one ever knew for certain, but some weeks afterwards a man from Rossnaree was heard to observe that he had seen the body of a goat borne past him when fishing in the Boyne one morning, and it may be presumed that the General, in the bitterness of heart consequent upon his blunder, sought a refuge in the bosom of the broad river from the impending ridicule of those who were wont to respect him.

KIT CASSIDY'S THREE TASKS.

"TALK about quare men," said Brian Boylan, the Blacksmith of Shanwalla, one evening as he raked the glowing *griosach** away from the nozzle of his silent bellows preparatory to leaving his workshop for the night, "did yiz ever hear how his grandfather got his wife?" and he inclined his head towards the doorway through which young Dan Mulligan had lately passed, leading a newly-shod horse.

"Troth, then, we never did, Brian," said one or two of the young men whom he addressed, in the same breath almost, and with an expectant expression upon their countenances.

"Well, then, I'll tell yiz," said the smith, as he dexterously conveyed some of the afore-said *griosach* to his pipe and commenced making further contributions of smoke to the already well blackened rafters, "that is if yiz id care to listen."

"Sorra ha'porth we'd like betther," said one of the boys, as he assumed an attitude of attention—an example which was speedily followed by all present, for Brian Boylan had the reputation of being a good story-teller.

* *Griosach* = Live ashes.

"It wasn't Dan's grandfather, yiz know, that was the quare man, but it's ould Kit Cassidy o' th' bog I mane. His daughter d' ye mind, was ould Mick Mulligan's wife, an' young Dan's grandmother, o' coorse.

"Well, it's often an' often I used to hear them talkin' of ould Kit Cassidy, an' the quare goin's on he used to have when he was in it.

"But I dar' say yiz often heerd o' some ov his quare ways yourselves, but that's nayther here nor there, as I'm only goin' to tell yiz how ould Mick Mulligan (he was young Mick then) managed to get his wife when the whole side o' the country thought he'd never put a ring on her finger.

"Quare as Kit Cassidy was, he had a snug houldin', an' managed to scrape a brave bit o' money together (times was bettther then nor th' are now), an' as Peggy, his only daughter, was as fine a girl as you'd meet in a day's walk, small wondher it was that half the boys in the three parishes wor cockin' their caps at her.

"Sorro much encouragement any o' them got from Peggy, except Mick Mulligan, an' it was well known to a'most everybody that there was a great *gra** between Mick 'an Peggy for aich other ever sence they wor slips growin' up together.

"Ould Kit wasn't much again Mick, for he had a likin' for his manly ways, an' he'd

* *Gra* = Love

often stop an' discoorse wid him about rastlin, an' leppin', an' weight throwin', an' the like, for ould Kit was a great borrie at them games in his young days, while as for Mick Mulligan there wasn't the batin' iv him between the Boyne an' Liffey.

"Howsomever, Kit wouldn't give in to him marryin' his daughter, for though he liked Mick well enough because he was a good man an' a nice, daicint fella as well, yet ould Kit thought that Mick hadn't altogether enough manes to keep Peggy comfortable without drawin' on her father's pocket, an' sure maybe he thought, like many another sence an' before, that because he had the bit o' money he'd get some terrible grand match for the daughter.

"Kit was always great for talkin' about the ould anshient times in Ireland, when kings, an' fairies, an' witches, an' giants, an' dhraggins, an' such like id be ramblin' round here an' there, risin' throubles an' divilment, an' he could tell more about Fin McCool an' Cuchullin, an' them ould hayroes an' warriors nor any man 'ithin forty miles iv him. He had a few ould books wid such like stories in them, an', what's more, he b'lieved every word o' them, an' it was woe betide any man that dar' conthradict him about th' fairies or dhraggins, or say that nobody ever done what the books said the kings' sons used to be able to do long ago.

"Well, the boys that used to be comin' to

see Peggy he'd *moidher** with talk about these ould stories, an' in th' end he'd get the books an' make the lads—at laste any that could—read out the stories for the good of th' company.

“An' there ould Kit id be sittin', I'm tould, wid his two hands on his knees an' his mouth open, thryin' to swally every word, an' noddin' his head at the good parts like a duck at a puddle after a long drought.

“Then he'd be complainin' about how the wurruld was changin', an' th' young men that wor goin' them times had no sperit in them, an' wor fit for nothin' but washin' praties or mindin' hens.

“Wan night after he was talkin' a lot like that he turned on the lads that happened to be sittin' around his kitchen fire, an' sez he, rale cross like, ‘Do yiz think, me fine fellas,’ sez he, ‘that all yiz have to do to get the finest girl in the barony is to come here night after night wid your mouths open for the bit to dhrop in like the way the *scallthans* † do be in their nests?’

“‘Let me tell yiz,’ sez he, ‘that me daughter Peggy is just as good as any o' them princesses in the stories, an' bad luck to the bit if she'll ever marry a man that doesn't perform some great fait.

“‘Me mind's med up,’ sez he, rale determined, ‘an' whoever is to get her in mar-

* *Moidher* = To deafen with noisy talk.

† *Scallthans* = Unfledged birds.

riage 'll have to do th' three tasks I'm goin' to give out to yiz now.'

"All the boys thought the ould man was gone mad through pondherin' too much over th' ould stories, an' troth maybe he was, too.

" 'Now,' sez he, 'are yiz listenin' to me,' an' he gev a quare kind ov laugh, 'the man that marries Peggy 'll first have—

" 'To go a perch wid wan step,
Over forty feet wid wan lepp,
An th' bog walk through
In rain or in dew,
'Ithout getting his shoes wet.

" 'There's Kit Cassidy's three tasks for yiz,' sez he, 'an' though I med them an' the verse meself they're as good as any that's in the books, an' not wan o' yiz,' sez he, 'need show your nose here till yiz come an' ax me to see the three tasks done.'

"Well, I needn't tell yiz, that put a stop to the boys goin' down to *kaylie** at Cassidy's, for every wan o' them knew as well as their hands wor on their bodies that wance ould Kit took a notion into his head nothin' could change him, an' mad or not there was no chance at all for any ov them if they went agen him.

"Poor Peggy herself, th' crathur! as yiz may well b'lieve, was in a terrible state about the way her father was puttin' her up before

Kaylie = An infomal visit to a neighbour's house for hatting, story-telling, &c,

th' whole counthry, an' makin' a show ov her, an' she done all she could to make him give up the mad idaya he had in his head, an' let her settle down paceable an' daicint wid th' boy she liked best, Mick Mulligan.

"But she might as well be talkin' to th' anvil there, an' even though she went as far as to get Father Walsh (God be good to him!) to go an' spake for herself an' Mick, it was all no use.

"For a while nobody thought that anywan would think of attemptin' the three tasks, for what man could go twenty feet wid wan step or over forty feet wid wan lepp, let alone walkin' across the bog in rain or in dew 'ithout gettin' his shoes wet, when lo! behold you, didn't wan o' the hayroes come back after a few weeks to claim Peggy.

"When th' lad kem an' towld Kit he was ready to do the three tasks th' ould fella was delighted, an' towld him to come the next Sunda' evenin', when he'd have all the neighbours gother as witnesses.

"Well an' good, Sunda' evenin' kem, an' there, sure enough, was half th' parish in the field at th' back of Kit's house ready to see th' fun. Peggy was nowhere to be seen, an' I'm towld she was gettin' ready to run away wid Mick Mulligan in case her father took it into his head that the fella that was goin' to thry the three tasks won.

"He was wan o' th' Morans of Knockdara, an' a brave hardy lad, too, I believe, but sure

everywan thought he was as mad as ould Kit to attmpt the like.

“When everything was ready Kit called on me hayro to perform the first task, an’ when everywan was expectin’ to see him take a race for the long step over the perch that was measured out for him, divil be in him if he didn’t put his hand in a sack he had across his showldher, an’ take out an’ ould step ov a jauntin’ car, an’ off he goes walkin’ over the perch wid the step in his hand.

“There was terrible shoutin’ an’ laughin’ an’ cheerin’, you may be sure, an’ though ould Kit was as mad as a hatter, an’ said he never meant that the thing was to be done like that, the crowd said it was fair enough, for he done what was asked when he went a perch wid wan step.

“‘Well, how about goin’ over forty feet wid wan lepp, me fine fella?’ sez ould Kit in the finish, ’ithout sayin’ whether he was satisfied wid the way the first task was done or not.

“‘Aisy enough,’ said young Moran, an’ he takin’ a houlth o’ th’ sack again, an’ when everybody was expectin’ to see him take out a pair o’ seven-laigue boots, like the wans in the stories, what does the boyo produce but forty crubeens.

“‘What are you goin’ to do wid the cru-beens?’ sez ould Kit.

“‘Them’s pigs ’feet,’ says th’ other, ‘an’ I’m goin’ to put them down on the ground an’ jump over them.’

“ ‘Take yourself an’ your crubeens to th’ divil owre this,’ sez ould Kit, fifty times madder nor he was before. ‘Do you think I’m goin’ to let a fella like you get me daughter on the vartue of crubeens! When I said feet, I meant men’s feet, an’ good men’s feet, too, mind ye.’

“ Well, the crowd partly agreed with Kit, an’ young Moran was cast on the second task, an’ had to give up all thoughts of Peggy, for Kit id only allow wan thrial for aich man.

“ The next month or two went past all nice an’ quiet, an’ just as the people were beginnin’ to forget all about Kit Cassidy’s tasks, didn’t another lad put in an appearance to claim Peggy.

“ This was a fella from over Mullagara way, an’ before he started he asked if he’d be let thry th’ step an’ th’ lepp on’ th’ slope ov a hill, an’ whether he’d wear his boots or not.

“ Kit agreed to let him thry his luck on a slope so long as it wasn’t too steep, an’ he towld him he could wear whatever boots he liked.

“ Well, the neighbour’s met as before, only this time it was in Kit’s glen field, where there’s a good slope down to the river.

“ Whether anywan med a fool of the Mullagarra lad or not I never heerd, but he expected to do th’ step an’ th’ lepp with a pair of boots that some fella in Dublin med for him. The boots had two sets o’ soles on them, wan about six inches below th’ other, an’ between

aich o' them was a couple o' these strong curled springs, like what ye'd see in an ould sofya or undher a bicycle saddle.

"Well, when the Dublin shoemaker was buildin' the shoes for the laddo he found out that he was workin' for a kind ov an omadhaun, an' sure, says he to himself like, 'if he wants boots wid springs undher them mightn't I as well take his money as anywan else?' Anyway, he med them, an' tould th' hayro that he wasn't to put them on his feet till he started to do the three tasks, 'because,' sez he, 'you might spile the springs.'

"Well, to make a long story short, th' lad got into th' boots, an' afther steadyin' himself on th' top o' th' slope, off he starts to get up steam for th' step, an' th' dickens such sport was ever seen in th' glen field before or sence. Wance he started he couldn't be stopped. Off he went bumpin' down the slope like a football, goin' higher an' higher wid every bump, but not coverin' enough ground wid any of his steps to be near th' perch, for all that th' lad was thryin' to do was to keep on his feet, an' that he managed till he pumped right into th' river.

"Well, of course, that finished him, an' there was nothing more heard for many a day about anywan attimptin' Kit Cassidy's three tasks.

"About twelve months after the Mullagara boy bumped himself into the river Mick Mulligan happened to meet Peggy's father

wan day on th' road, an' they commenced talkin' about wan thing an' another, till in th' heel o' th' hunt Mick brought round th' conversation to th' daughter, an' he ups an' axes ould Kit if he wouldn't let them get marrid.

" 'Mick Mulligan, me boy,' sez ould Kit, an' he dhrawin' himself up terrible proud like, 'What's worth havin' is worth thryin' for, an' I think you ought to know that I never break my promises.'

"Then, for the first time, Mick began thinkin' whether he could do the three tasks or not, an' he used to be goin' about wid his head down, an' his forehead wrinkled like a clergyman when he's walkin' about outside a church waitin' for it to be time to go in an' give the sarmon, but if he was to be thinkin' yet he wouldn't find out what it was ould Kit meant when he gev out the tasks.

"But the man that has woman's wit to help him can never be bate, an' so it was with Mick Mulligan, for when he went an' towld Peggy that he could only do wan of the three tasks, didn't the girl herself—however she found it out—tell him how to get over the other two.

"The next day about dinner time me bould Mick, with th' hat on three hairs ov his head, goes up to Kit Cassidy's an' offers to start doin' the three tasks as soon as ever he liked. Ould Kit wanted to notify the neighbours, but Mick said there was no raison for doin'

that, as he'd do the three things nate an' clane, to everybody's satisfaction, afther a football match he was goin' to play in the following Sunday.

"Mick Mulligan was the captain of the Shanwalla footballers, an' divil a better captain twenty men ever had, they say—an', mind you, there wor good men goin' them times.

"Though Mick thried to keep it saycret, the news leaked out that he was goin' to thry the famous three tasks as soon as the football match id finish.

"Ould Kit was at the match, o' coorse, as large as life, walkin' around the field takin' big pinches o' snuff now an' again, an' lamentin' that the men worn't like what they wor in ould times.

"As soon as the match was over an' everywan shoutin' an' hurrahin' for Mick Mulligan an' his twenty men, ould Kit walks up to the winning team, an' sez he—'Boys I want yez all to stan' by an' witness your captain attimpt Kit Cassidy's three tasks.' Then he turned round to Mick, an' sez he, as he took an extra big pinch o' snuff—'Now, *a wouchal*,* you can begin!'

"Wid that over walks Mick to where ould Dan the Fiddler was just tunin' up gettin' ready for a dance.

"'Dan,' sez he, 'is she in goin' ordher?'

"'Bedad she is, Mick,' sez Dan

* *A wouchal* = My boy.™



"All at wance off flies Mick into the dancin'"

“ ‘Give us the “Boyne Hunt,” then,’ sez Mick, ‘for I’m in goin’ ordher, too.’

“Nobody knew hardly what the lad was up to till the fiddler commenced to play th’ould ‘Boyne Hunt’ reel, an’ then all at wance off flies Mick into the dancin’. ‘Give me room,’ sez Mick, as soon as he started, ‘for I’m goin’ to do the “side step,” an’ it’ll be over a perch long.’ Then everywan commenced cheerin’, for they saw what Mick was up to, as off he went sideways, batin’ the tune all the time. Afther he travelled over twentywan feet ould Kit Cassidy roared out, ‘More power, Mick, me boy; that’s the first o’ th’ three tasks done.’

“ ‘Now for the second,’ sez Mick, when the cheerin’ went down a bit.

“ ‘Here, boys,’ sez he to his twenty men, ‘no one can deny yiz are not good men, an’ so your feet must be good men’s feet. I want yiz to lie down on your back, ten on wan side, an’ ten’ on the other, wid the soles of every man’s feet against the soles ov another man’s.’

“As soon as that was done, Mick took a butt ov a race an’ lepped over the forty feet, an’ I needn’t tell yiz the crowd cheered louder nor ever. Ould Kit was delighted, an’ cheered as loud as anywan, because, as I towld yiz, he always had a *gra* for Mick.

“ ‘An’ now, Mick,’ sez he, ‘as there’s a nice dew on the grass, will you just cross the bog without wettin’ your shoes?’

“ ‘Here goes,’ sez Mick, an’ he makin’ for the bog, an’ sure enough, he done that aisy, too, an’ a few weeks after he was marrid to Peggy. So there’s the story for yiz, boys.”

“But, Brian,” said one of the listeners, “you didn’t tell us how he got through the bog without wettin’ his shoes.”

“Why, then,” said Brian, with a pitying look, as he rose to leave, “National eddication isn’t doin’ a lot for yiz. He went in his bare feet o’ coorse.”

THE APOSTASY OF CHARLIE DIGNAM.

THERE was trouble approaching in the parish of Shanwalla. That such was the case was apparent to every man and woman from the cross of Mullahoo to the Scatternagh ford, except, indeed, the person most concerned.

Father MacGowan had been heard to drop a few hints. Considering it was Father MacGowan who dropped the hints, something was going to happen; and considering also that Father MacGowan had been lately transferred to the parish of Shanwalla for the avowed purpose of raising it from the moral apathy into which it had glided during the administration of his easy-going predecessor, that something was likely to create a sensation in the neighbourhood.

Within the past month he had spoiled a beautiful game of cards at Nancy Farrell's, broken up a fine wake over poor "Dan the Tay" in Walshe's barn, and scattered the dancers right and left from a grand subscription ball (tickets one shilling each, refreshments included) in Malone's big hay-loft.

Father MacGowan was evidently a priest not to be trifled with. He spoke little, but his

acts more than made up for his lack of verbiage. Accounts of his thoroughness and determination had come over the hills and across the bogs from his former parish, miles and miles away; and so Shanwalla found itself—when it looked into its own black interior—in fear and trembling.

Father MacGowan had, as we have said, given hints. This was enough. His hints on former occasions had been disregarded. Shanwalla experienced the results, and trembled for the future.

One institution yet remained which had not been made an object of the parish priest's attack, and dear was that institution to a certain section of the boys of Shanwalla.

This was Charlie Dignam's publichouse.

Father MacGowan had said to Peter Moran one day :

" You know where the chapel is, Peter ? "

" I do, your reverence," said Peter.

" Well, Peter, if you were going to the chapel from here, how would you go ? "

" Why, your reverence, that's a quare question."

" Answer it," said Father MacGowan.

" Well, then, your reverence, wouldn't I cross the bridge, and turn to me right, and afther walkin' about fifty yards wouldn't I be at the chapel."

" How would you turn then ? "

" Wouldn't I be fornent it then, an' all I'd have to do would be to go in."

“Well, Peter, when you come to Mass on next Sunday morning, don’t forget to turn into the chapel; for, mind, Peter, I intend to break up the opposition. You can tell your neighbours.”

Now this was the hint which had done most to perturb Shanwalla, and after two hours’ discussion at the forge that night a notion got abroad that Charlie Dignam’s publichouse, which was situated exactly opposite the chapel gate, was destined to be the next subject of Father MacGowan’s attention.

The Sunday Closing Act had not then come into operation, and it was a great solace to some of the incorrigibles (for at that time Shanwalla possessed such) to have a creamy pint of porter at Dignam’s bar just before Mass on Sunday mornings. And then when two or three of them, like Red Mick, North Jack, and Bill the Jur, got in there together, it often happened that by a not uncommon series of progressions the “wan pint” had increased to three or four per man by the time the road was crossed to the chapel.

Now, Charlie Dignam was a peculiar character in his way, flighty at times, but yet a man of great stubbornness. He set himself up among the neighbours as knowing a thing or two, and though it was surmised he would be the next person to come in conflict with Father MacGowan, no one cared to tell him that his peace was threatened.

North Jack, who had a fuller knowledge of

sectarian friction than any of the other customers, gave it as his opinion that what Father MacGowan meant by the opposition was the Protestant church, which building was situated about half a mile further south on the same road.

Red Mick fell in with this opinion. "How could Father MacGowan know that we do be here on Sunday mornin's? He never kem in; an' sure, everywan that knows anything knows we don't come in till afther th' Acts, and then, iv coorse, we're quite safe in takin' a pint or two."

"Somebody's towld him, that's all; but, sure, we'll soon find out whether it's us he manes or not," said another of the council.

Matters were at this stage when Sunday morning came, and though Father MacGowan was observed to look severely at the windows of Dignam's publichouse before he turned into the chapel yard, the thirsty souls were not deterred from making their weekly dive across the road as soon as the good priest had come out upon the altar, a fact which was always announced by what was known as the second bell.

Father MacGowan preached a nice sermon on the Gospel of the day, every word of which beyond "Dearly beloved brethren" has been completely forgotten.

He said a few words afterwards, however, which sunk deep in the minds of some listeners.

Standing on the altar steps, and looking grimly towards a group inside the lower door, he thus delivered himself:—

“Since I first stood upon this altar on Easter Sunday last, now five weeks ago, I have been delighted each Sunday morning” (here he paused, and certain members of the congregation began to breathe freely), “delighted beyond measure,” he continued, slowly, “with the purity and sweetness”— (“Oh, this is lovely,” thought Peter Moran, “an’ we expectin’ a trimmin’”)—“of the atmosphere of this church during the reading of the Acts and the Prayer before Mass; but from that point onward I have been compelled to notice that the atmosphere of this sacred edifice has been more or less tainted with the poisonous smell of intoxicating drink, and if on a future occasion I experience a like vitiation of the atmosphere I shall take stringent measures to re-purify it.”

This finished it. All doubts were now set aside, and Charlie Dignam and his Sunday morning customers were looked upon by the remainder of Shanwalla as a herd set aside for slaughter.

The incorrigibles did not seem to mind. They flattered themselves they were not too bad. “What harm was it for a poor fellow to take a pint of porter on Sunday morning more than any other day? Wasn’t it all right if they got into the chapel before Mass actually commenced? They couldn’t see what

right Father MacGowan had to interfere with them." And so they reasoned.

Charlie Dignam was different. His temper was aroused. He had sold drink in the house long before Father MacGowan was ordained, and he'd continue to sell it as long as he got customers. How could he help the short-sightedness of a former parish priest who had the chapel built opposite the publichouse? He should have known better—that was all.

The Dignams had been there for generations. They had sold their drink for generations, and to generations, and were never bullied by the parish priest. He wasn't going to be terrorised, and unless Father MacGowan altered his tactics there would be trouble.

Sunday came again, and, uninfluenced by what had been said, two of the most daring of Charlie's customers rushed across to the bar as usual for the creamy pint. They stole into the chapel afterwards, just before Mass commenced, flattering themselves that they had escaped detection.

Charlie Dignam, however, took little pains to conceal his entrance. He came in and walked to his customary place in the usual way.

How he knew, nobody seemed to understand, but, without apparently taking the trouble to look, Father MacGowan was aware of their entrance.

His remarks after the sermon were briefer than on the preceding Sunday:—

"It is with pain that I have again to refer to the matter of which I spoke last Sunday. Three persons have disregarded me. I shall call out their names from this altar if they persist in their present course, though probably you are already aware of the identity of the principal offender. The nearer the church the farther from God."

Then the cloud burst. The unbreakable spirit of the Dignams was up, and with it its earthly tenement.

Never was there such excitement in the little chapel. Was Charlie Dignam taking leave of his senses?

No. He was simply taking leave of Father MacGowan and the Roman Catholic Church!

In perfect silence he arose, turned towards the door, and quitted the chapel.

"He was not going to be disgraced before all the people. That's what came of being a Catholic. His resolution was taken. He would become a Protestant at once, and just let Father MacGowan see he couldn't do as he liked with Charlie Dignam."

All this, and much more, Charlie said when the remainder of the congregation came out from Mass, and all through the ensuing week he proclaimed his intention of turning his back upon the chapel and going up the road to join the Protestant congregation when Sunday morning arrived.

Many of the people laughed at the idea, and could not afford to treat it seriously, while

others, of a different turn of mind, remembered how Charlie's father had been a bit "quare in his ways," and, no doubt, the son fully intended to carry out his declared intention.

Shanwalla was in a state of terrible perturbation when the following Sunday morning duly came round, and with it no effort on the part of Charlie Dignam to obey the summons of the chapel bell. There were no customers to drink pints of porter, and the atmosphere of the chapel was untainted. Father MacGowan said little that day, and though Red Mick, North Jack, and all the other incorrigibles were in early, and seemingly quite devout, he did not appear satisfied. Some members of the congregation, who prided themselves on their discernment, said he looked quite pained; but that might have been because he had just received news of an old person being dying whom he was compelled to hurry off to see the moment Mass finished.

Scarcely had the clatter of Father MacGowan's horse's hoofs ceased to be heard by the people at the chapel gate (as he galloped off to attend the dying person) when the door of Dignam's publichouse opened, and out stepped Charlie in his best, and, without a look at the chapel, he set off jauntily in the direction of the Protestant church, the bell of which was then summoning its congregation to Divine service.

Strange to say, Charlie carried in his hand



Thus equipped, Charlie started forth

his own old, well-thumbed prayer-book; and Patsey Kelly, who possessed a remarkably sharp pair of eyes, said he could swear that he saw "a bit of the Rosary bades stickin' out of his pocket."

Thus equipped, Charlie started forth, but as he walked his heart failed him. He began to feel the loneliness of his situation. It was all right to say he'd turn, but it was not so easy to do it. He felt he was making a great mistake, but now that he had started out he was going through with the business. He would go to the church, whether he believed in it or not. "No! they weren't going to have the laugh at him." On Charlie tramped, and, as he walked, he felt in his heart that each step was carrying him further from grace and nearer to eternal perdition. His was not a conversion begotten of reason and religious conviction, and so he felt his pride was hurrying him along the road to utter ruin.

The bell, instead of its usual unmeaning jangle, seemed to say as plainly as words could—"Doing wrong," "doing wrong," "doing wrong, Dignam." "Doing wrong." Yet on he went, impelled, as he afterwards averred, "by the divil or Doctor Faustus."

In this state Charlie arrived at the church porch, wiped his feet on the mat, and went in, taking care to grasp his prayer-book more tightly, and surreptitiously touching his pocket to feel if his beads were still there.

The service had not commenced, though all the members of the congregation were present. The manner of his entrance was only surpassed by that of his exit. Without the slightest hesitation Charlie strode up the aisle, past pews in which were seated gentlemen-farmers, their wives and children; others in which were the squireens and squires, with their families, and on to the topmost pew, in which, in semi-regal grandeur, was enthroned the Right Hon. Colonel FitzHardinge, landlord of half the county.

With a gravity becoming the occasion, Dignam opened the door which gave admittance to the FitzHardinge pew, and coolly seated himself by the great man's side.

The consternation previously created in the chapel was as nothing to that for which Charlie was now accountable in the church.

The Hon. Colonel gave premonitory signs of an apoplectic fit. The ladies were horrified. The congregation scandalised. The vergers—recovering from his first shock—rushed along towards the plebeian offender as fast as his dignity and the character of the place would admit, and, tapping Dignam rather sharply on the shoulder, said severely :

“Do you know what you are doing, sir? You must get out of this at once.”

The rejoinder petrified him.

“Arrah, lave me alone, man! I know well enough what I'm doin'; but if I'm goin' to hell, I'm goin' with a gentleman,” and

Charlie inclined his head familiarly towards the Colonel.

Why attempt to describe what followed. A minute later Charlie found himself reclining on the churchyard sward.

He "rose again," as he said himself, "from among the dead," feeling glad he wasn't one of them.

Having felt himself all over to make sure that he was not the possessor of any broken bones, he turned his back upon the church which had rejected him and trudged home-wards.

"Afther all," said he, as he surveyed his broken hat and torn coat, "I wasn't thrun out o' the chapel, an' maybe Father MacGowan won't be too hard on me when he hears ov the maulin' I got. Bad luck to that game-keeper," he added, as he felt a sudden twinge of pain, "'twas he had the heavy boot."

That evening, to the astonishment of everyone, Father MacGowan was observed to take the wrong turn at the chapel. When he came out of Dignam's house half-an-hour later he didn't appear anything the worse for drink, but there was a look of satisfaction on his face and a twinkle in his eye which showed he was not in bad humour. It was even averred that when he got down the road and was all alone, a peal of laughter, loud and hearty, was heard from his direction.

Charlie Dignam, the penitent, was duly re-

ceived into the congregation again. The incorrigibles disappeared. There was no further evidence of vitiated air in the chapel, and Shanwalla was on the road to regeneration.

BARTLE-THE-BASKET.

WHAT his proper name was—and presumably he had one—never troubled the people of Shanwalla. As “Bartle-the-Basket” he first arrived in the village, and though in time another name was bestowed upon him by a certain section of the community, it is as Bartle-the-Basket he is generally alluded to by those who traded with him.

“You can just call me afther me basket,” he said, when first interrogated with regard to his name, “as the people in other places do. It mayn’t be very grand, but it’ll do all right, an’ it’s an advertisement for me bizniz as well.”

“Gintlemen an’ the like,” he was wont to observe, “do have a great dale o’ bother goin’ back through all kinds of ould parchments, hithries, an’ tombstones to thrace their names to anshint times and show they’ve gran’ peddygrees, but I carry me family three on me arm, an’ tho’ it often grows heavy as th’ road grows long, troth I’d rather carry it nor some o’ th’ names wid peddygrees stuck on to them.”

“The less peddygree a man has th’ betther,” Bartle would say when upon this subject.

“Look at your lords an’ earls, an’ such like titled people, an’ if you read th’ histories of their families you’ll find that their ancesters stopped at nothin’. Fathers an’ sons, an’ uncles an’ nephews an’ cousins, slaughthered aich other out ov a face to get estates an’ castles, an’ though some o’ the slaughtherin’ was done wid swards in what they called fair fight, a grate dale was done other ways as well, an’ so the way of it is that these great, long peddygrees only prove the people who have them to be descendants of illustrious robbers, murdherers, an’ other ill-conditioned men.”

“No peddygrees for me, thank you. I’m satisfied to take a name from me ould basket, an’ if it doesn’t carry me far, faith I’ve to carry it long distances—now, what are you goin’ to buy?” —

This was the invariable termination of Bartle’s dissertation on pedigrees, and once having delivered himself of it, he opened his basket and displayed wares well calculated to excite a bartering spirit in the breasts of those who gazed on its wealth of necklaces, imitation jewellery, pocket-knives, song and story-books, and many other articles of a like nature.

Taking into consideration the very low prices at which “Bartle-the-Basket” sold some ravishingly beautiful articles of jewellery, the inhabitants of Shanwalla—some of them at least—after his first appearance found



"I'll bet you"

themselves entertaining the idea that he was a simple poor fellow who was selling his wares, as he himself asserted, at less than he bought them for. This idea, it may be remarked, wore away with the gilt of the aforesaid articles, and when Bartle again arrived in the village he found some of its inhabitants less ingenuous than when he had become acquainted with them.

Yet he managed withal to sell further articles at avowed sacrifices, and so having, as it were, formed his Druidical circle, Bartle periodically appeared to offer sacrifice therein, and preach against pedigrees.

As the years passed, and the people upon whom the philanthropic dealer insisted on bestowing his bargains became more difficult to please, Bartle contracted a habit when wrangling over the qualities of some of his goods of using the words, "I'll bet you it is" or "I'll bet you it isn't," as the case might be, and so often did he feel constrained to use the phrase that in time it occupied a very important place in his benevolent transactions. And so it came to pass that some of those who had not learned to respect the itinerent dealer—and whether it be to Shanwalla's disgrace or otherwise, it must be recorded their number was not insignificant—had the hardihood and assurance to drop the title by which the "basket-man" had first introduced himself and substitute for it the peculiar pseudonym of "Bartle-I'll-Bet-You."

Had Bartle been content to keep this phrase within strict trade bounds it might never have threatened to overshadow his more ancient one, nor would those incidents have occurred which were eventually destined to create a chasm between him and the inhabitants of Shanwalla.

From wanting to bet on the merits of his wares Bartle displayed an aptitude for bringing his unfortunate phrase into almost every subject upon which he conversed with the villagers, and as these conversations were not infrequent when the dealer was in their midst, many opportunities were afforded various members of the Shanwalla community to decide arguments and support assertions by wager.

Whether it was owing to the innate virtue of its inhabitants or otherwise cannot now be definitely ascertained, but notwithstanding the fact that challenges to prove itself a sporting village and have a bet were periodically flung in Shanwalla's face, so to speak, by "Bartle-the-Basket," it steadfastly refused to accept such for a lengthened period.

Then it was that Bryan Boylan made up his mind that the next time "Bartle-I'll-Bet-You" came his way and used the unfortunate phrase alluded to he would take up the challenge.

In due time Bartle arrived, and Brian Boylan was the first to discover that the phrase in question was unfortunate.

Like the simplicity apparent in his first

attempt at dealing in Shanwalla, so also was Bartle's simplicity displayed in some of the offers which he made to bet.

"It was simply the 'height o' good luck for him' that nobody bothered about takin' up his bets," Bryan Boylan had observed one evening, "but wait till I hear him offerin' a foolish bet again an' I'll tache him a lesson."

The opportunity arrived. Some days later "Bartle-the-Basket" entered Brian Boylan's forge at the same moment as Brian's little daughter, the former individual carrying his basket as usual and the latter a kettle filled with water.

This water was intended for Mrs. Boylan's use in the smith's household, and having the kitchen fire occupied at the time the "woman of the house" took advantage, as was her custom, of the fire which glowed dully upon the forge hob. As Brian took the kettle in his hand, Bartle, apparently noticing the insignificance of the forge fire, said in a sarcastic tone, "Bile a kettle on that! Why, man, there's hardly enough fire in it to light me pipe."

"It'll bile th' kittle for all that, an' quicker nor you think," said Brian with emphasis.

"I'll bet you it won't bile for the next half hour," retorted Bartle with an air of complete assurance.

"What'll you bet?" asked Brian eagerly.

"Anything you like—a shillin', or five if you've a mind to," was the answer.

"Make it five, then," said Brian; "'twill be aisily airned."

"Agreed, me boy!" and Bartle produced a bright crown piece and laid it upon the anvil.

Everything was soon arranged; the kettle was placed upon the fire, and the time noted.

"The bet is that the kittle won't bile in half an hour, mind yez," said Bartle, turning to the knot of spectators who stood around.

"On that fire!" added Brian, pointing to the dull red spot where the kettle rested.

"On that fire!" asserted Bartle.

"There's nothin' in the bet to prevent me workin' the bellows," said Brian, as he caught the handle and commenced to blow vigorously.

The sparks shot up, the fire glowed, and flames sprang out from what was erstwhile a dark mass of coal-slack, and all the spectators laughed in company with Brian, who was almost offensively hilarious.

"The money's mine," shouted Brian triumphantly, when, after about ten minutes' blowing, the steam rolled forth in volumes from the kettle.

"That's where you make the mistake," said Bartle quietly; "the kittle isn't bilin' yit."

"Why, what's your eyes for?" shouted everybody. "Don't you see the steam?"

"Av coorse I do, but th' kittle isn't bilin' all the same."

"You're losin' your senses man to talk like that," asserted Brian.

“An you’re losin’ your five shillin’s, me man, retorted Bartle, quietly. “It’s the wather that’s bilin’ an’ not th’ kittle.”

Brian gasped, and the laugh died off his face; an altercation ensued as to the terms of the bet not having been properly understood; but the matter having been taken before the school-master for adjudication, Bartle was declared the winner. The news of the bet spread rapidly, and Shanwalla felt aggrieved, inasmuch as it had suffered a loss of dignity and prestige through the medium of its blacksmith at the hands of a wandering dealer.

Gradually, however, the news filtered through from other villages that Shanwalla was not alone in this respect, for stories were told of apparently foolish bets which Bartle had guilelessly made with members of other village communities, the results of which were—from Bartle’s point of view—eminently satisfactory.

In one place he had been standing talking to a couple of men when a third man passed.

“It’s a fine thing to be like that fella,” said one of the men to Bartle, “goin’ along smokin’ a cigar.”

“That’s not a cigar he’s smokin’,” said Bartle.

“Troth it is,” said the man, “I saw it plain enough.”

“I’ll bet you it isn’t, then,” was the rejoinder, and the bet having been made Bartle proved to the satisfaction of everybody listen-

ing, except the man whose money he wanted, that it was a half cigar the man was smoking.

On another occasion he overheard the phrase, which was very common in the neighbourhood, "as crooked as the river o' the Doolagh, an' that's the crookedest thing in th' world."

"I'll bet you it isn't," challenged Bartle at once, and the bet being made it was soon clearly demonstrated to the audience that the river referred to could not be the crookedest thing in the world, seeing that its banks were quite as crooked.

With tales like these coming to the ears of the villagers, it may be imagined that Bartle-the-Basket came to be looked upon in a light different from that which illumined him when first he bowed to Shanwalla, and a desire to circumvent him in some way or other was fast forming in the minds of those with whom he came in contact.

But though Shanwalla finally had the satisfaction of being the scene of Bartle's discomfiture, it could not claim the full glory of the transaction, inasmuch as the person who triumphed over the strolling merchant was not a native of the village.

Cavanagh's Theatre of Varieties had for several days been entertaining the people of the village and the surrounding district, and the echoes of the little glen at the head of which Shanwalla is situated were beginning to grow accustomed to the sounds of drum

and cornet as the histrionic procession paraded the street each evening prior to the grand display of drama or tragedy as advertised in language and characters which, whatever their other characteristics were, certainly had no pretensions to modesty.

At this juncture in the history of Shanwalla, and on an evening when the afore-mentioned procession was completing its triumphal progress to the door of the wooden theatre, Bartle-the-Basket arrived in the village and became suddenly smitten with a desire to visit the temple of Thespis.

Having deposited his basket in the house where he usually lodged, he expended twopence on a pit seat, and doubtless enjoyed the piece which the management had placed upon the boards for that particular evening.

The said management, in the person of Dan Cavanagh, was upon the stage in all the glory of a Highland chief, and certainly he left nothing to be desired in the manner in which he clashed his broadsword against the weapons of his Lowland enemies, and danced Highland flings and strathspeys before the curtain in the intervals while the scenery was being arranged for succeeding acts.

It is still a matter of surmise whether during his stay in Shanwalla some one had been speaking to the manager and proprietor of "Cavanagh's Theatre" with regard to the characteristics of Bartle-the-Basket—though some people would have it "he knew all about

him of yorè"—but when the performance had finished Dan Cavanagh was not slow in evincing a marked desire to cultivate the society of the philanthropist of the basket.

Having invited Bartle and several others into Dignam's publichouse, the "showman," to give him his business description, called for drinks, and sat down in a careless attitude by the fire, with his legs crossed, and one trouser leg so adjusted as to proclaim to all who cared to observe that in changing to his ordinary garb he had forgotten to remove the tartan hose of the Highland chief.

"That's a terrible grand patthern for a stockin'," remarked Bartle innocently, though not without a peculiar glitter in his eye.

Dan Cavanagh pulled his trouser leg a bit higher in order to give everyone an opportunity of admiring his tartan stocking, not to speak of the shapely limb it encased.

"Yes, my friend," Dan acquiesced, "it is not often you come across a pattern of that description—I sent all the way to Scotland to get this."

"Well, now, only think o' that, boys," said Bartle, as he gazed round the assemblage. "Wouldn't it be a quare thing, now, if there was more o' th' same patthern in this very house?"

"Drink up and' don't be talkin' nonsense," said the showman, as he emptied his own glass.

"Nonsense, is it? I'll bet you it isn't then."

"Bet what?"

"I'll bet you I'll find another stockin' like that in the house," and Bartle pointed to the showman's ankle.

"You'd only lose your money, my friend," observed Cavanagh, quietly. "Why, where would any of these people obtain the hose of a Highland chief?" and he waved his hand towards the observers in dramatic style.

"Will you bet?" asked Bartle.

Dan Cavanagh glanced downwards at his tartan hose in contemplative mood, and his eyes being thus cast down, he was unable to catch the many signs and looks of warning which were directed to him, for everyone present felt that if the bet were made it would result in a further triumph for Bartle, and, therefore, further disgrace for the patient and virtuous people of Shanwalla.

Consequently it was with feelings of sorrow they heard the showman say, as he raised his head, "Well, then, I'll have a bet, as you're so anxious."

"What'll you bet?"

"Oh, anything you like."

"Say ten shillin's, then," said Bartle excitedly.

"Make it a pound if you like."

"Mind, I'm in airnest!"

"So am I, and there's my sovereign."

"And there's mine," almost shouted Bartle, as he produced two half-sovereigns and placed them beside Cavanagh's coin on the table,

"Now, boys," said the showman, addressing the crowd, "who has a stocking like this?"

"No wan at all!" came the chorus, with accompanying demonstrations.

"Maybe you're wearing the same pattern yourself?" said Cavanagh, turning to Bartle.

The answer electrified the listeners and caused them to groan in sympathy almost for the Thespian fly which had become entangled in the wily basketman's toils.

"No, then, I haven't, but maybe you'll find the fellow ov that stocking on the other leg," and Bartle broke into a loud guffaw.

"Is that what you call a fair bet?" exclaimed the showman, as he jumped to his feet with a fine appearance of indignation.

"It's that fair that you'll have to pay," said Bartle. "You bet there wasn't another stockin' o' that pattrn in the house, an' you'll have to stick to it."

"Very good! But where's the other stocking?"

"Why, on your other foot, ov coorse."

"Gentlemen," said the showman, addressing the onlookers, "I'll take you to witness
—,"

"Never mind takin' anywan to witness!" exclaimed Bartle. "Show us your other stockin'."

"I take you to witness, gentlemen," protested the basketman's victim, "that I was persuaded to make this bet."

“Persuade a showman!” remarked Bartle, sneeringly. “Show us your other stockin’.”

“I can’t.”

“Well, if you can’t you’ll have to lose your pound, me hayro!”

“I won’t.”

Bartle stretched his hand for the money, which still lay upon the table.

“Just a minute,” said Dan Cavanagh, as he placed the leg which had been so long in the background upon a chair. “I can’t show my other stockin’, but at the same time I don’t think I’ll lose my money,” and with a swift movement he displayed an athletic limb entirely innocent of hose, tartan or otherwise.

“I was in such a hurry to come in here to enjoy Bartle’s company that I had only time to take off one of my stockings,” exclaimed Dan, as he quietly annexed the stakes.

Peal after peal of laughter from the crowd followed this unlooked-for development, and long ere they had ceased to sound Bartle-the-Basket had left them and his two half-sovereigns far behind. Nor did his bets ever again disturb the serenity of Shanwalla.

THE BEST MAN IN FINGALL.

It was a day of excitement in Shanwalla. Judging from the manner in which the "grown up" male portion of the community clustered in front of Brian Boylan's forge it was evident that the structure, or something connected with it, was in some way responsible for the disturbance of the usually quiet village.

Before proceeding further it may be as well to state that the door of Boylan's forge constituted the principal advertisement hoarding of Shanwalla.

On the particular day referred to this advertising medium had risen above its ordinary dull character, and bore upon its rugged surface a brilliant expanse of paper, which, in turn, was covered with letters of such wondrous shapes and hues that Joe M'Grath, the harness-maker who read aloud from the poster, was several times compelled to pause in silent admiration and without a due regard to punctuation.

Larry Dempsey, who stood at his shoulder, suggested rather unfeelingly that Joe rested "only before the big words just to gether himself like a cat before she jumps," but in

view of the fact that Joe possessed the reputation of being a "knowledgeable man," Larry Dempsey's insinuation may be allowed to pass unheeded.

Circus posters had been posted on the Shanwalla forge door before, but anything possessing such an attraction as the present one had never previously excited the village.

And now for the item which disturbed the equanimity of Shanwalla.

It read as follows :—

"The Renowned Capriano, Champion Wrestler of the World, assisted by Pepini (late Champion of Greece and Turkey), will give exhibitions of wrestling in various styles. Capriano is open to wrestle all comers in any style, and the sum of Ten Pounds will be cheerfully paid by the management to the wrestler who succeeds in once throwing the champion."

"Ten pounds!" shouted Brian Boylan, as he playfully gripped hold of Larry Dempsey, and by the dexterous application of an "outside crook" extemporised that individual as a seat. "Ten Pounds! ye say. Why, be the mossy diamonds, I think I'll have a fall wid him meself."

"Let me up, Brian, you man shuler," fumed Larry, "or I'll be the death of you."

Brian allowed him to rise, whereupon Larry gave his coat tails a shake, looked at the laughing face of the stalwart smith, and

prudently became interested in the poster again.

"Next Monda', at Skerries, an' for wan night only," observed Charlie Dignam, as he glared fiercely at the poster. "Be the tare o' war, it's a morthial pity I'm not about thirty years younger nor I am."

"What would you do, supposin' you wor?" queried Larry Dempsey.

"Do!" snorted Charlie, with a glance of contempt at Shanwalla's modern degenerates. "Do! Well I'd *do* for Misther Capriano, as great a fella as he is, an' I'd bring home that ten pounds into the bargain."

"But, Charlie," said Joe M'Grath, "how do you know you'd be able to throw him? Of coorse, we all know you were a *borrie** in your day, but, then, you know nothin' o' th' ways o' rastlin' belongin' to them furriners, an' like as not he'd make a hare o' you."

"What do you mane to say?" queried Charlie.

"Just this much. Them furrin' fellas all rastle in outlandish styles that we know nothin' about, an' where 'ud y' be I'd like to know when wan o' them 'ud tackle you like that?"

The crowd smiled approval on Joe.

"What d' ye say to that, Charlie?" somebody asked.

"Just this much an' no more," was the re-

* *Borrie* = A champion.

spouse. "I'd rastle Mither Capriano in the good ould Fingallian style, an' purshuin to me if I wouldn't give him as much as he wanted o' rastlin' for a day or two anyway."

Having delivered himself of which sentiment Charlie left the crowd, and returned, as he himself facetiously put it, to his bar and the "company of good sperrits."

"The Fingallian style!" observed Joe M'Grath, as he looked solemnly at Brian Boylan.

"The Fingallian style!" echoed Brian, as he drew his hand across his brow. "Why, I never heerd tell ov it."

"If coorse you didn't, you poor *gomeril*,"* said Joe, on whose intellect a light was breaking, "but can't you see it's our own style ov rastlin', he manes, bekaise it's different from the Turkish, Greek, or Romin, Cornish, an' all them other furrin styles."

"But, sure," said Brian, "the Maith, an' Kildare, an' Louth, an' Wicklow men all rastle the same way, so it can't be the Fingallian style all out."

"Sorra a matther about the name, Brian, avic; it's a great idaya iv Charlie's an' no mistake. I've an idaya, too, but it'll take some jaynus to carry it to a head, but just lave me to meself, Brian, an' if I don't manage to have a fall in the Fingallian style at the circus next Monda' night you can bile me for pig feedin' the day after."

* A *gomeril* = A fool.

"Charlie," said Joe M'Grath, a few hours later, as he handed a small bottle over the counter of Dignam's publichouse, "put a dhrop o' th' hard stuff in that iv you plaze. I'm goin' to do a little bit o' business this evenin', an' I'm takin' a tint o' whiskey on th' head iv it."

"It's a morthial pity, Charlie," he continued, as the bottle was being filled, "that the boys gev up the rastlin'."

"Maybe it is and maybe it isn't," remarked Charlie, somewhat shortly.

"Well, in troth, that's me own opinion, anyway! Here, we are now, an' you're too ould, an' Brian Boylan's too ould, an' all the hardy young boys we had a few years ago are gone to America, an' the sorra wan left but Ned M'Coy o' th' lane that could stan' up an' rastle a fall daicently."

"Oh! you're thinkin' o' that ten pounds yit, are you?"

"Faith an' that's just what I'm thinkin' iv, Charlie, an' if I can only get Ned M'Coy to th' circus next Monda, I'm thinkin' we'll have some fun."

"It's no use thryin'," said Charlie, decisively. "Ned never rastled anywan sence he broke Martin Keegan's leg in Lusk about ten years ago at th' Shrove Tuesda' rastlin', an' I'm full sure he's not goin' to start now out o' the new—laist iv all in a circus."

"He's a good man, though."

"Divil a bettther in th' county or the next

wan to it, but I tell you he'll never rastle again."

"Don't be too sure o' that," said Joe, knowingly, as he put the bottle in his pocket. "Anyhow, I'm goin' to do me best for Shanwalla," and so saying he strode away into the gatherng evening shadows.

Up the street he went, over the bridge, and away up the Dublin road, swinging steadily along as if he were walking for a wager.

Peter Mulhall, an old and firm friend of Joe, lived at some distance from Shanwalla, and it was to Mulhall's abode that Joe was now hurrying.

After a smart walk of somewhat less than half-an-hour's duration Joe reached his destination, and found to his joy that his friend Peter was at home.

Soon afterwards the two cronies retired to the parlour, the door of which they carefully closed behind them.

What the nature of their business was no outsiders ever knew for certain, but it was evident from the satisfied expression of each as they separated that both were well pleased with the transaction.

Next day Joe M'Grath wandered down the lane that led to Ned M'Coy's snug homestead, by a seeming coincidence arriving there a few minutes in advance of the postman—an individual whose movements Joe had been carefully observing previously from various points of vantage.

"God save you, Ned," Joe called out cheerily, on catching sight of a stalwart form in the haggard.

"God save you kindly, Joe!" came Ned M'Coy's deep voice in response to the salutation, his face showing genuine pleasure as he greeted Peter Mulhall's bosom friend, and one who, as such, was also on friendly terms with Peter's pretty daughter, Rose, a colleen whom Ned had lately come to look upon with more than ordinary interest.

"Gran' mornin', isn't it," observed Joe, as he entered the haggard.

"'Tis, then, thank God for it," assented Ned, as he came forward to meet him.

"I kem to ax if you could spare me the loan o' your spring dhray for a couple ov hours, Ned?"

"You can have it and welkim, Joe, any time you want it."

"Thank ye kindly, Ned! I suppose you're goin' to Skerries next Monda' night to see the circus?"

"Troth, then, I don't think I am."

"There'll be great fun intirely," said Joe, insinuatingly, "an' everywan's goin' to see the rastlin' champyin' of the wurruld."

"Musha, then, it's little they've to do," said Ned, rather reprovingly.

"An' I'm tould," continued Joe, undauntedly, "that MacAnauill o' th' bog is goin' to thry a fall wid him for the ten pounds."

Ned's eyes brightened, and a slight flush crept into his cheeks. It was evident the love of his once favourite pastime was not yet dead in his heart. As he spoke he looked Joe full in the face.

"I'd like to go well enough, Joe, but I'm afraid I mightn't be able to keep from goin' into the ring meself."

At this juncture the postman entered the haggard, and handed a letter to Ned, who held it in his great brawny hand for a few seconds, as if not knowing what to do with it. Then he turned it over a few times, glanced at the writing sideways, then at Joe M'Grath in the same manner, tried to peep inside where the gum had not stuck properly, and, finally, seeing there was nothing else to do, opened it and read as follows:—

"Drumogue, Friday.

"DEAR NED,—I hope this will find you in good health. I want you to do me a small service on Monday next. Rose and Maggie want to go to the circus in Skerries, an' I would be much obliged if you could give them a lift on the jaunting car, as I suppose you will be going on it. I am terrible bad with the roomatics myself, and can't go, and Mat and Dan will be away at the fair of Drogheda. Hoping you will oblige the girls, I remain, your sincere friend,

"PETER MULHALL."

Joe M'Grath, who had apparently become deeply interested in the peregrinations of a

black beetle at his feet, stole a few sly glances upwards, and noted with satisfaction a wave of colour spreading over Ned's face, and the suspicion of a smile on the corners of his mouth as he read.

He was too much of a diplomatist, however, to allow Ned to know that his countenance betrayed pleasure, and so, as the latter finished reading he asked:—

“Anything sayrious, Ned?”

“Yis! I mane no!” said Ned, confusedly.

“What's this we wor talkin' about?” queried Ned, anxious to get away from the subject of the letter.

“What wor we talkin' about?” reiterated Joe, scratching his head, as if he had forgotten. “Oh, ay! the circus o' coorse, an' the rastlin'. You was sayin' you'd like to go, I think.”

“Was I, now?” said Ned, hesitatingly.

“Yis,” answered Joe unblushingly, “you said you'd like to go an' have a look at the champyin.”

“Well, begorra, I suppose I might as well go as the rest of yiz.”

Joe's eyes literally danced with pleasure when Ned made the intimation, and there was a slight tremor of excitement in his voice as he said:—

“Well I must be off home now, Ned. I'll be round for the spring dhray bimeby,” and Joe hurried away delighted, while Ned, as

soon as the harness-maker was out of sight, sat down on the shaft of a cart to have "a good read" at Peter Mulhall's letter.

* * * * *

The ringmaster of the "Franco-American Unrivalled Mammoth Circus" looked around him with satisfaction. Never had he seen the great tent so well filled. Almost every inch of space had been availed of from the top row by the canvas down to the edge of the ring. The Shanwalla boys were there in great force, tier above tier, waiting in anxious expectancy for the wrestling bout which was set down on the programme as item Number Seven.

Joe M'Grath had industriously circulated the report throughout the barony that Ned M'Coy had engaged to try a bout with the world's champion, and here, as a proof of the engagement, was Ned seated in the front row, and altogether oblivious of the fact that to the majority of those present he was the great attraction of the circus.

The audience puzzled the ring-master and the performers.

The most brilliant feat of equestrianism hardly elicited applause.

The jokes of the clowns passed unheeded, the trapeze turn evidently failed to excite admiration, and up to the conclusion of item Number Six everything seemed to fall flat.

With the introduction of the large, thick

carpet for item Number Seven a change was apparent.

Necks were craned and eyes strained to catch a first glimpse of the great men who were soon to follow.

And when eventually the wrestlers strode into the ring, what a rousing cheer they received.

Then the ringmaster understood. These people had come to see what wrestling was like. Well, they would have value for their money.

Capriano and Pepini, smiling, muscular, and bedecked with medals, came forward gracefully to the centre of the carpet, bowed like princes to the assemblage, and at once commenced giving an exhibition of their skill.

And such an exhibition as it was. Now Cornish style, then catch-as-catch-can, again Cumberland.

Such strength, such activity, such feinting and posturing, such gripping and breaking away, the men of Shanwalla had never seen before, and instinctively their thoughts turned to Ned M'Coy, and they felt themselves wondering how he could have the hardihood to dare attempt a trial of strength and skill with either of these wonderful wrestlers.

Pepini was, of course, vanquished in each bout. That was part of the programme as previously arranged. The world's champion had never been known to receive a fall.

The turn finished amid deafening applause, and, while the champion rested, the ring-master came forward, holding a ten-pound note in his hand, and announced in stentorian tones that Signor Capriano "was ready to meet all comers, according to advertisement."

A dead silence fell upon the audience. No one stirred.

A thousand eyes sought the form of Ned M'Coy, and Ned, having had his attention directed to the fact by Rose Mulhall, who was seated by his side, looked around, and, finding himself thus observed, blushed furiously.

The champion, following the glances of the audience, smiled encouragingly in Ned's direction. Ned, not understanding, blushed still more furiously, while Rose, becoming nervous, edged away a bit from him.

Still a solemn silence. Not a whisper was heard. The Shanwalla boys scarcely breathed.

Had Ned M'Coy become cowed? Would the challenge pass unheeded? Not so. Joe M'Grath felt the time for action had come, and rising from his seat he jumped into the ring with the shout, "Shanwalla takes up the challenge, an' Ned M'Coy'll rastle the wurruld's champyin."

A thunderous burst of applause greeted the bold announcement. Joe M'Grath's stroke told, and Ned M'Coy, ere he could well realise what had happened, found himself in the ring opposite the redoubtable Capriano.

"What style, please, zare?" asked the polite champion, as he bowed to Ned and smiled benignly.

Joe M'Grath whispered something in Ned's ear.

"Fingallian style," answered Ned, hesitatingly, with a puzzled look at Joe.

"What was ze gentleman's please to say?" asked Capriano, as he smiled and bowed again, looking at Joe M'Grath.

"Fingallian style," shouted that individual, with a knowing shake of the head. "Fingallian style, mind you! No furrin rastlin' for the lads of Fingall."

"Fingallian style," reiterated a hundred Shanwalla throats with a forceful eloquence that brought the circus manager from some hidden recess where he had been counting the receipts, and caused the Royal African Man-Eating Tiger to cower trembling in his cage.

The manager, being a man of perspicacity, quickly took in the situation, and the announcement was immediately made that Capriano would wrestle Ned M'Coy in the Fingallian style.

He was an agreeable chap this Capriano, and had no objection to become a champion in the Fingallian style in addition to the honours he had already obtained in the more generally known systems of wrestling.

Capriano learned from Joe M'Grath that the Fingallian Style was simply a combination of Cornish and Catch-as-catch-can, the only

difference being that no holds were allowed to be taken on the belt or below it.

The preliminaries were soon arranged, and five minutes later the wrestlers stood facing each other in the centre of the ring, Capriano wearing a Cornish wrestling jacket, while Ned, who had been divested of his ordinary coat and vest, stood arrayed in Brian Boylan's frieze jacket, looking quite a stripling in the presence of his gigantic opponent.

There was, however, a light in Ned's eyes and a dilating of his nostrils which spoke of spirit and determination.

Once fairly in the ring his usual shyness evaporated, and he stood before his formidable antagonist with the easy grace of a born athlete, his heart high-beating and every sinew and muscle braced for a struggle upon which he felt depended the reputation of the village which had (through the medium of Joe M'Grath) declared him its champion.

Joe's heart almost failed him at the last moment, as the disparity between Ned and Capriano was fully borne in upon him.

Larry Dempsey, noticing Joe's look of discomfort, whispered to him, "It's no match. Poor Ned'll be kilt. God help him, the innocent crathur, to let himself be inveigled into such a place. But, mind ye, if he's hurted you'd better look out for yourself."

Before Joe could offer a remark the contest had commenced, and both wrestlers, in crouching attitude, were playing for a hold.

Suddenly Ned was gripped unfavourably by the sleeve, but with a rapid twist and plunge he was free, and in the fraction of a second was seen to have a favourable hold on his opponent's coat collar.

Capriano seemed to take things quietly, and stretching forth his hands with a smile of conscious superiority took the *outside* holds on Ned's coat, and then commenced a wonderful exposition of the "collar-and-elbow" style of wrestling.

Capriano began the footplay, and marvellous indeed was the agility and address he displayed. Ned, on his part, seemed equal to the occasion, and slipping one of Capriano's ornamental trips, caught him smartly on the heel, staggered the champion, and following up his advantage with lightning-like rapidity darted underneath his powerful antagonist to "cross-buttock" him.

Capriano, however, aware of Ned's intention, by the exercise of his great strength freed himself from M'Coy's grip, and, jumping clear, gave the Shanwalla man a wrench so terrific that he went staggering to the further edge of the carpet, where, ere he had quite recovered, Capriano pounced upon him as the hawk pounces upon the sparrow, and gripping Ned around the body lifted him back over his bent knee as easily as if M'Coy had been a child.

This, however, was an old Fingallian trick, and Ned, being conversant with it, counter-

played by bringing his foot to bear lever-like on the inside of Capriano's further leg, again fairly staggering the champion.

Then it was that Ned M'Coy made his effort. His opportunity had come. With all the strength of his muscular right arm he gripped his opponent around the neck, while swiftly and dexterously his right leg entwined itself around Capriano's left.

A chorus of voices, hoarse with excitement, came from the onlookers

"The inside crook! The inside crook!"
"M'Coy has th' inside crook on him!"
"Hurrah, Ned, yer sowl you!" "He'll take him!" "No, he won't." "By th' tare o' war he will, though!" "More power M'Coy!" "Bully man, Ned!" "Stick to him for your life!" "Hurrah for Shanwalla!"

Capriano made prodigious exertions, shook himself like a captive lion, strained, twisted, pulled and pushed—all in vain. Ned M'Coy's inside crook had never been known to fail, and it was evident that Capriano was unable to free himself.

Like grim death Ned stuck to his crook, feeling he had the advantage, and using every ounce of his strength in the endeavour to lever the champion backwards to the floor—and defeat.

But Capriano was a man in a million. At Ned's first application of the hitherto invincible "inside crook" the champion had been

pulled backwards several inches out of the perpendicular, where for a moment or two he remained swaying, but gathering himself for an effort, as only a man of his physique and training could under such circumstances, he not only refused to yield further despite his opponent's most strenuous efforts, but straining forward had actually regained his balance, when, like a flash, Ned unwound his leg from the "inside crook," and suddenly pulling the champion forward—in the direction in which he was straining—M'Coy put all his power, energy, and dexterity into as glorious an "outside crook" as ever was seen on the plains of Fingall.

Heavens! what a roar shook the earth as, like a falling tower, Capriano came down upon the carpet underneath M'Coy.

As the rush of an avalanche was the rush of the Shanwalla boys over seats, benches, and barriers, right into the ring, where for several minutes they remained undisturbed, cheering the while almost loud enough to split the canvas of the tent.

When the uproar subsided the manager made a neat complimentary speech in handing the prize to Ned.

"You must make a speech, too, whispered Joe M'Grath to the victor.

"I'd rather give back the money," said Ned.

"Well, never mind," said Joe as he jumped upon a table. "I'll make one for you."

“Ladies an’ gentlemen, an’ fellow counthrymen o’ Shanwalla, ay, an’ Skerries an’ other places as well,” said Joe in his best style, “I think we showed everywan here to-night that there is good men in Ireland yit. Capriano is a bully man, an’ a thremenjis good rastler. He may be the champion o’ th’ wurruld for all I know, but there’s wan thing I’m thunderin’ sure ov, he’s not the best man in Fingall.”

For Shanwalla the circus had ended.

Hours afterwards, on the homeward road, manly voices could be heard from out the darkness proclaiming aloud the invincibility of Shanwalla, and announcing the willingness of that village to oppose the remainder of the universe in the wrestling arena whenever the representatives of that portion of creation should feel so inclined.

THE ABDICATION OF JEM DALY.

It was looked upon as little short of a national calamity in Shanwalla when "Jem the Priest" turned his back on the parochial residence and walked straight down the street and into Dignam's publichouse, where he called for a quart of porter with the air of a man who had suddenly determined to commit suicide.

Not that he had any well-defined idea of drinking the porter, but he had, on separating from the parish priest about five minutes previously, resolved to do something desperate, and considering he had never entered a public-house for the past thirty years this was the first act of such a nature which suggested itself to him.

Father MacGowan would be sure to hear of it, and then—"Well he could be as sorry as he liked for spakin' the words that drove Jem Daly from the situation he held as man an' boy for over thirty years, an' with credit to the parish an' himself, too."

With this reflection "Jem the Priest," which was the Shanwalla abbreviation for the title "Jem, the Priest's Boy," put his lips to the edge of his foaming tankard, tasted the

porter, and then, setting down the flowing measure, surveyed with mixed feelings the enormous task with which in his folly he had taxed himself.

However, there was no hope for him now, even if he did feel a little sting of conscience when he remembered he was at that moment guilty of a terrible delinquency.

Here he was—he, Jem Daly, the priest's boy of Shanwalla, a man who was known and respected over half the county, a man that had assisted three parish priests and five curates in ministering to the wants of the faithful in the parish; more than that, a man that the Bishop himself had spoken to and even complimented on more than one occasion—here he was, sitting down in Dignam's publichouse with a quart of porter at his elbow, giving the height of bad example to all who might chance to see him.

However, it was too late to retreat now; "he made his bed, and he was going to lie on it." There was the terrible quart measure staring him in the face, and beyond the quart was Charlie Dignam glancing sideways at Jem, with looks of mingled wonder and inquisitiveness.

It must not be supposed that during all this time Shanwalla had remained inactive.

The rumour that "Jem the Priest" had marched straight into the publichouse went around like a flash, with the result that, from various points of observation more or less con-

cealed, about fifteen pairs of eyes were concentrated upon the door of that establishment, and all of these having failed to note the reappearance of the expected object in what by common consent was adjudged a reasonable time, it was deemed advisable to fling forth a reconnoitring party, which was accordingly done.

When the aforesaid party—little Patsey Kelly, to wit—returned and reported how, on peeping through the shop window, he had seen “Jem the Priest” sittin’ down wid a quart in his hand, several of the interested ones at once signified their intentions of going into “Dignam’s” and seeing for themselves the wonderful sight.

Whether any motive other than that of idle curiosity was responsible for “Jem” being no longer left to his reflections undisturbed it is difficult to say. Suffice it to here set down that on this occasion those who sought the company of the priest’s boy could not by any stretch of the imagination be termed teetotallers. Strange to say, Jem hailed their entrance with pleasure. He had arrived at such a stage in his reflections that, recognising his inability to complete the task he had in the first hot moments of his anger undertaken, he was at a loss how to retire from his position with the dignity befitting his character.

“Good morra, boys,” said Jem, looking

up from his seat as the knot of inquisitors entered.

"Good morra, Jem," said one of the number pleasantly; "tisen't often we see you here."

Jem saw his line of retreat opening up as the new-comers took their seats, and at once proceeded to avail himself of it.

"Troth, then, you may well say it isn't, Dan," he answered to the one who addressed him, "but now as I am here yez might as well take a share o' this quart wid me."

No objections were raised, and soon, to Jem's great satisfaction, the contents of the quart were being emptied into sundry glasses, and from thence the transition rapidly proceeded to more accommodating vessels of a different pattern and material.

"Draw them another quart," said Jem to the publican, with the air of a man who had never wandered far from a tap-room. "'Tisen't often they get the chance o' drinkin' my health."

The measure having been duly replenished, and the process of transition having been duly resumed, Jem was suddenly asked, "What would Father MacGowan say if he knew where his boy was?"

"Father MacGowan has no boy that I know of," said Jem, rather sharply, as his face became slightly coloured.

"What! D'ye mane to say ye left the priest?" queried half a dozen voices in varying tones of surprise.

“Troth, then, I did,” answered Jem; “an’ it was near time, too.”

“You didn’t fall out wid his reverence, did you?”

“Not altogether,” said Jem, as with a resumption of full dignity he started to explain.

“Yez all know how long I’m in th’ parish, lookin’ afther all kinds o’ little matthers connected wid the chapel an’ the priest’s house, an’ whatever priest we might happen to have, for, mind yez, when a new priest comes to the place, it is no joke for him to have to go findin’ out all the ins an’ outs o’ the parish for himself, from the best kind o’ flies to use for th’ throt to the man that wants the most lookin’ afther on a fair day.

“Every priest that ever kem to the place would always ax my opinion about this an’ that an’ th’ other thing, an’ ov coorse I always gev it; an’ more than that, some ov them—an’ it’s I that knows it—have no more sense than childre in some ways, an’ often an’ often I’d have to study them an’ advise them what to do long before they’d think ov askin’ me.

“Well! an’ what was the result? We never had any throuble in th’ parish, an’ everything was well attinded to, an’ no complaints from anywan up to th’ time Father MacGowan, God bless im! kem to th’ place.

“Well, there he is, wid tons o’ Latin, an’ Greek, an’ Haybrew, in his head, an’ at th’ same time he’s as simple as a child, an’ any

*shuler** goin' th' road can make a fool ov him.

"Wan day last December he was in the chapel yard, an' there was an ould thramp goin' along th' road, an' he purty cowl'd an' hungry lookin'.

"Jem,' says his reverence, 'run after that poor old man, and tell him I want him.'

"'Is it that thramp, your reverence?' sez I. 'Yes,' says he, 'go at once.'

"Begor, that was the lucky thramp! Back he kem an' got a good dinner in the kitchen, an' when he was goin' out, what did his reverence do ony take down a fine top-coat of his own an' hand it to the thramp. 'Here, my poor fellow,' sez he, 'I've a house and you've none; this coat will keep you warm.'

"Well, sure I thought it was my duty to intherfere an' prevent him from givin' his fine coat away to a goboy that 'ud pawn it, an' dhrink th' price ov it, but all th' thanks I got was to be towld to mind my own business and not intherfere wid his, if I wanted to keep me situation.

"I was thinkin' o' lavin' then, only I thought betther o' stoppin', for, sez I to myself, if I keep close to him I might be able to keep him from bein' humbugged; but if I go away he'll be lost intirely.

"Well, yez know what the Mullaghgara end o' th' parish is like. There's some ould wimin over there, an' you couldn't kill them

* *Shuler* = Wanderer.

wid a stick if you thried, an' they're always fancyin' they're terrible bad, an' goin' to die, an' sure sorra ha'porth does be on them but impidence and imagination.

"There's ould Mrs. MacGarrigan, she takes it into her head yisterda' evenin' to send for th' priest, an' just as I had th' thrap washed an' th' mare an' everything comfortable for the night, didn't the message come; in the middle o' th' teems o' rain, too.

"Jem,' says his reverence, as soon as he got th' message, 'put th' mare in th' thrap. I must be off to see Mrs. MacGarrigan, of Mullaghgara; she's very bad.'

"'Couldn't she wait till mornin', your reverence,' says I (for it was foammin' rain an' gettin' terrible dark), 'the bog road 'ill be dangerous to-night.'

"'Daly,' says he, vexed like, 'I'm not asking your advice. Put the mare in the trap. If the night is too bad for you, you can stop at home.'

"Well, off we went, for I wasn't goin' to let him dhrive by himself; an' what do you think, if th' ould lassie wasn't sittin' snug an' comfortable at the kitchen fire when we got there.

"'How are you? Mrs. MacGarrigan,' says his reverence.

"'Not very well,' yer reverence,' says Mrs. MacGarrigan, an' she standin' up' an' makin' a curtshey.

"'I was worse a couple o' hours ago, yer

reverence,' says she, 'wid a terrible bad pain in my stomach, an' so I sent for you, because,' says she, 'there's nobody here to advise me, an' I wanted to ax yer reverence what's th' best kind o' medicine to take.'

"Did yez ever hear the like—bringin' th' two ov us, not to mention th' mare an' thrap, out on such a night for nothin' else but to ask what any wan could tell her?—an' th' best ov it all, he never said a cross word to her.

"An' then, this evenin' I thought I might as well have somethin' to say to him in th' way ov advisin' him, an' what d'ye think does he tell me, afther all my years in th' place—that I mustn't think I'm th' Bishop, an' that if I wasn't satisfied I could go; an' just to show him I had some sperit I took him at his word.

"So there he is now, God help him, without any wan but ould Betty, the housekeeper, to advise him; an' it's little she knows about the wants ov th' parish.

"An', mind yez," continued Jem, as he raised his hand solemnly, "let no wan in Shanwalla blame me if everything about the chapel goes to rack, for I was as good as ordhered away from the place I looked afther summer an' winter for over thirty years, an' kept in such a way that yez was proud out ov it; an' good raison yez had, too, for where was the priest's house in the diesis that was half as well kept?"

“Troth, then, his reverence ’ll be sorry for losin’ you, Jem,” said one of the little crowd, with an air of the deepest conviction. “Maybe he was only jokin’ when he said you could go, an’ he might be glad if you went back this minit.”

“Jokin’ or airnist, it’s all the same to me,” answered Jem, with the air of a man trying to reconcile himself to meet an impending doom, “I’m off to th’ sayside now to stop a while wid my married sister, an’ before I went I thought I’d just call in here before I left, just to have it to say that there wasn’t a house in the parish of Shanwalla I never was in; an’ so, boys, good day to yez all, an’ good luck to yez,” saying which, “Jem the Priest” arose from his seat and walked out of Dignam’s publichouse, not without a certain amount of dignity, assumed at the dictates of a conscience which seemed to be shouting triumphantly in his ear, “Good man, Jem! You didn’t drink the porter, after all!”

Strange to say, while the inhabitants of Shanwalla were holding some important councils the following day as to what steps should be taken with regard to the important vacancy to be filled in the community, a raw-looking lad of about nineteen summers came across from the particular village to which the late “priest’s boy” had retired, and presenting himself as a candidate for the position so lately vacated, was, to the surprise of everyone, immediately accepted.

Shanwalla, in the main, felt a bit hurt at the appointment, for it was more or less a slight upon the capacities of several likely young fellows in the parish, who were beginning to look up their Catechisms afresh with a view of offering themselves for the position as soon as they fancied they were proficient enough to face the test which they believed awaited them.

However, as the schoolmaster said, "It was a case of a fool rushing in where angles feared to tread," and so the disappointed furbishers of long-neglected Christian lore laid the flattering unction to their souls and their Catechisms upon their shelves and resignedly subsided to the level of their ordinary avocations.

Whether Father MacGowan entertained any affection for his late servant would be difficult to say for certain; but, judging from the fact that the new boy's only recommendation was a verbal one from Jem Daly, it may be concluded that he was at least inclined to show some favour towards the deserter.

It may be that the good priest saw in this recommendation, such as it was, an attempt on the part of Jem to keep up a kind of connection between Shanwalla and himself, with a view probably to the opening up of negotiations for a reinstatement later on; and when Betty, the housekeeper, informed his reverence that "Jem's clothes an' things" were still in the place, something like a smile

came over the kindly features of the parish priest.

The new boy proved to be totally inexperienced with regard to many little items of duty connected with the particular sphere to which he had been translated, nor did he show during the first couple of days any aptitude to learn.

Short as that period was it proved sufficient to show Father MacGowan he had to contend with one of those characters who are prone to make stupid blunders, and more faults were committed by the new boy in the space of thirty hours than the old one had been guilty of in the corresponding number of years.

The question whether Jem Daly was aware of this trait of his successor, and so was carrying out an act of deep diplomacy, might here arise, but having regard to the character he had borne for thirty years we let it pass.

Father MacGowan, finding fault with the "new boy's" roundabout methods in some of his first acts, ordered him rather severely to do whatever he was told exactly as he was directed, and to take the shortest route wherever he was sent. Thus it was that in obeying the latter injunction he marched through a fine bed of strawberries in the garden on his way to water some cabbage plants, and so he came to hear from old Betty, without any attempt on Father MacGowan's part to refute the statement, that "Jem Daly was worth forty ov him."

Other statements of a like nature were made with regard to the absent one, who in all probability was moodily spending his time in his sister's place by the sea giving his mind to bitter reflections with regard to the state of Shanwalla.

How they reached him has never been discovered, but the fact remains that every day during the first week of his exile Jem Daly received reports of the blunders of his successor, with the result, strange as it may seem, that he felt himself wondering if he would soon get the opportunity of returning to his old position again.

On the ninth day of separation from what he was fast coming to look upon as his only home on earth, Jem, who had passed a restless night, might be seen at an early hour of the morning wandering along the road which led towards Shanwalla in a hesitating manner, as if he were being attracted by some strange influence in that direction, despite apparent efforts to remain where he was.

Suddenly he twisted his head as he heard the sounds of hastily advancing feet, and before he had time to conjecture who the early pedestrian might be, the "new priest's boy" of Shanwalla came rushing around the bend of the road at that peculiar pace which is known as a "dog's trot."

Jem's heart gave a great bound as he noticed a bundle under the arm of his successor, and when a few seconds later he heard from the

lad's lips that he had "left Shanwalla for good," Jem could hardly repress a cry of delight.

"How did you come to lave so soon?" asked Jem, with a careless air.

"Lave so soon!" echoed Father Mac-Gowan's latest servant; "troth it was well I was let lave at all, an' only for the priest I think they'd a thrun me in the river, they wor so terrible mad."

"What on earth did you do?"

"Just what I was towld, nayther more nor less."

"What was it, man? Did you do any damage to the chapel yard or the garden?"

"I only done what I was towld, I tell you, an' that was to ring the bell for th' Angelus at six o'clock an' at twelve. Ould Betty used to be up early every mornin' to ring th' bell, when I went first, an' she'd ring it every other time, too, till yisterda', when she started me to do th' ringin, 'because,' she said, 'tis you're job when you're here.'

"Well at dinner-time I rung it, an' it was all right, too; an' his reverence was close to me, an' says he, 'That's right, my lad; I'm glad to see you have learned that lesson all right. Don't forget,' says he, 'you're to ring the bell at six and twelve o'clock whenever you're here, and you need not wait for anyone to tell you.'

"Well, begorra, it went all right at six

o'clock, too; an' nobody found fault, but troth it was another story the next time.

"Accordin' to instructions, out I turned at twelve, an' hour o' th' night I was never out at before in all me life, an', mind ye, I was mortal afraid, too, for that's the time all th' ghosts does be out.

"Well, I caught houl't o' th' bell chain an' began to pull th' 'wan, two, three,' th' way I was showed.

"Before I was half way through wud th' ringin', I could hear dures openin' an' shuttin', an' feet comin' runnin' along th' sthreet, an' I was just sayin' to meself that I never knew th' Shanwalla people wor so holy, when somewan caught me by th' arm an' said, 'What is it, avic?—what is it?'

"What's what?" said I, givin' another pull.

"'Is it a fire, or a murdher, or a rizin ov th' Fenians,' says two or three o' them together.

"'Say your prayers, me daicint people,' says I, 'don't yez see I'm ringin' th' Angelus.'

"Wid that they ran an' cotch a houl't ov me, an' only for Father MacGowan, who was hurryin' out wid wan arm in his coat an' he thryin' to get th' other in as he kem up to us, I believe they'd a thrun me in th' river. They're terrible people in Shanwalla, an' I wouldn't spend another hour among them for any money, they're that death on me."

Instinctively Jem Daly took a few steps towards Shanwalla.

"I was to tell you," said the hero of the midnight tocsin, "that his reverence is willin' to take you back if you're satisfied to be content wid doin' your own work as priest's boy."

"Why, that's all I ever attempted to do," thought Jem, as he hurried forward.

* * * * *

Three hours later, having given sundry promises to Father MacGowan—which it may be recorded were faithfully kept—Jem Daly was restored to the dignity of the office which nine days previously he had in an unfortunate moment abdicated.

DINNY DOWDALL'S BUTTON.

"DADDY," said Larry Dempsey's youngest son, as he approached his father, who in company with others was taking a rest by the bridge of Shanwalla at the close of a sultry day in July, "did y'ever see a button wid a coat on it?"

"There's a queskin for you!" said Micky Nolan, the horse-breaker, who was one of the group, as he took the well-blackened clay pipe from his lips and gazed on the questioner's father with a most comical expression of countenance.

"What d'ye mane, sonny?" asked the latter, addressing his curly-headed offspring.

"Can a button have a coat on it, daddy?"

"You're askin the question the wrong end first, Larry," said one of the group. "What you mane is, can a coat have a button on it?"

"D'eed, then, it isn't," said the urchin, with a contemptuous toss of his curls.

"'Deed, then, it isn't," said the urchin, button wud a coat on id for six small buttons."

"Arrah, gossoon, don't be makin' a fool ov yourself. It's a coat ov paint that's on it, may be."

"Dinny Dowdall says that somebody towld

him it's a coat of arms, an' if it's only arms, sure it isn't a right coat, is it, daddy?"

"Run away an' play, an' never mind Dinny Dowdall's button," said the elder Larry, who, not being well posted in heraldic signs, thought it prudent to evade the subject.

The youngster moved away with a disappointed air in obedience to the command, and as he went Jack M'Nulty, the journeyman blacksmith, better known in the neighbourhood as "Jack the Jaynus," quietly detached himself from the group and proceeded in the same direction as Larry Dempsey the younger.

The group by the bridge remained in silence for a few minutes, when little Patsey Hogan, the thatcher, raised his head defiantly, and, looking Larry Dempsey straight in the face, said, "I don't believe you know what a coat of arms is."

"Maybe I do an' maybe I don't," grunted Larry; "do you happen to know anything about coats of arms yourself?"

"Aye, everything," said Patsey, giving his head a confident shake.

"Troth, then, I wish you knew as much about coats o' thatch an' we'd be comfortabler when the rain comes."

There was a general outburst of laughter at this sally on the part of Larry, and the little thatcher was on the point of indulging in some recriminatory verbiage when Micky M'Guire broke in soothingly—"Don't put any pass on

him, Patsey; can't you see he's a bit cross in himself this evenin'."

"What's all the laughin' about?" asked Jack the Jaynus, who rejoined the group at this juncture.

"Oh, just a little joke we had amongst ourselves."

"Well, do yiz know where I was sence?"

"Sorra know, we har'ly missed you."

"Well, when I saw little Larry, the crathur, goin' off discontented about the button wid th' coat ov arms, I thought I'd just slip into Dowdall's and buy it from young Dinny for the poor gossoon, an' a ha'penny in Dinny's hand brought the big button into mine; but before I give it to young Larry I want to show it to yiz an' to tell yiz somethin' about it," saying which Jack produced a large metal button carrying the design of a hurler with caman raised in the act of striking the ball, and underneath the Gaelic words "*Buail go Tapaidh*."*

"Isn't it a curious thing," continued the journeyman (as the button was being handed around, "that that button belongs to the same part o' th' counthry as meself, an' just as quare that I met wid it so far away from home?")

"Well," said Micky M'Guire, as he returned the article under discussion to its temporary owner, "I often saw lions an' birds, an' soords an' daggers an' sich like on livery

* *Buail go Tapaidh* = Strike swiftly.



"In our times, long before 'Ninety-eight"

buttons before, but sorra take me if I ever saw a hurler on wan."

"Begor, then," said Jack the Jaynus, with the air of a savant, "there's more to be tould o' that hurler than could be tould ov a dozen o' th' buttons wid th' lions an' tigers on them, an' as far as I know meself the people wid foreign animals for their crests are few an' far between that can tell you what th' 'rigination o' them was."

"Thru enough," assented Micky, "Sure half th' people we know, wid their crests an' their liveries, are shoneens an' upstarts who happened to make a bit o' money wan way or another, an' then, me dear, nothin' less 'ill do to dhrive them but a boy in livery wid some crest or other that they've no more right to nor meself shinin' big an' grand on th' buttons."

"That's not the case wid this coat iv arms," asserted Jack, who now held the button in his hand, "an' if yous would like to listen I'll tell yous how the hurler kem to be the crest o' th' Dillons o' Monaghara."

As it was evident from the manner in which the listeners gathered around the speaker that each person present was anxious to hear the promised story, the narrative was at once commenced.

"In oul' times, long before Ninety-eight, an' some time afther th' battle o' th' Boyne, there lived an ould gentleman at Monaghara, whose estate was wan o' th' finest in

the county, an' tho' it was well known that his only son had fought an' died undher Sarsfield at Limerick, yit there was no interference wid th' ould man wan way or another. Th' only child left him was a daughter, who was as fine a specimen of Irish beauty as you'd find in a day's walk, an' only about nineteen years of age at the time. Some o' th' ould people used to say it was because o' this girl that the father was left unmolested in his estate, because all th' young sparks belongin' to King William's side for miles aroun' wor mad in love wid her, an' every wan o' them thinkin' to themselves that they'd marry the young lady an' become owners o' the big estate all in good time.

"Others used to say that the father done some act of kindness or service for King William when he was in the neighbourhood wid his throops, but, anyhow, whatever way it was, nobody attempted to dispossess him, even though he was a Catholic an' his son fought for King James.

"At the time I'm spakin' of the fightin' was all over, but at th' same time th' counthry was terrible unsettled, an' it was aisy enough for any Catholic to get thramped on by any of th' other side that was ill enough to think o' doin' it, though, mind yous, I'm not goin' to say that they were all bad.

"There was wan young fella in the neighbourhood, named Hugh Dillon, who was only twenty years of age, an' he had fair cause to know how hard th' laws wor against the like

of him. He was only a gossoon of about twelve at th' time o' th' fightin', an' as his four elder brothers rode off to the Shannon wid Sarsfield and went to France afther, the land his father an' mother (who died when he was young) left for th' family was taken away from himself an' his sister, all but a farm of about thirty acres, an' the lion's share of th' ould family houldin' gev to a captain in wan o' King William's regiments.

"When young Hugh Dillon was about eighteen years of age he was almost six feet high an' built accordin', an' as fine a young fella for runnin', jumpin', ridin', or throwin' th' weights as you'd come across in a month o' Saturdays, an' as for hurlin', sure it was gev into him that there wasn't the like o' him in th' county. I forget now what was th' name o' th' captain that got th' grant o' th' Dillon's land. Anyhow, he wasn't a bad lookin' fella, tho' he was over forty years ov age, an' a widower to boot. He had no childer, an' when he was a while in th' place he began to look round him, an', like a good many others, he said to himself that it would be worth his while to wait a few years for th' ould squire's daughter.

"An' so he set to work an' left no stone unturned to get into the good graces of the squire an' th' young lady he had his eye on, an' he med himself so agreeable in the long run that all the other hayroes gev up th' idaya of thryin' to win the squire's daughter, an' so

the captain at the time I'm tellin' yous ov was left, as he thought himself, compleate mather o' th' field.

"But he wasn't, I may tell yous, all th' same, an' when in the finish he asked th' young lady to marry him he found out to his great surprise that she hadn't the slightest intention of doin' so. He couldn't for th' life ov him undherstand why he was refused, but if he could only see the sweet young lady in Hugh Dillon's arms about an hour later telling her fears and troubles to him whose heart's strongest love was her's, an' her's only, then the bould captain would know how it was he was refused.

"The squire knew ov th' love between his daughter an' Hugh Dillon, an' had nothin' to say against it, because, though the Dillon's wor down a bit sence the war, their family was as good as his own, but, all the same, th' squire didn't think it would be wise for them to get married, or even to let on they wor lovers, for he was afraid that the captain might use his powerful influence against him at Dublin Castle.

"But th' captain was thinkin' and' thinkin' all th' time how he'd get th' girl, an' at last he med up a plot an' got the ould squire arrested an' thrown into jail on some false charge or another, but ov coorse he didn't let on that he'd hand, act, or part in th' bizniz.

"He'd got it into his head that the squire was against him marryin' the daughter, an' he thought if he had him out o' th' way for a

month or two he would be able to get th' girl's ear, an' then if everythin' failed he could get the father out o' jail again, an' then the squire would be on his side out o' gratitude.

"Well, you may depend on it, the poor girl was in a terrible way when her father was put in prison, an' for two or three days she done nothin' but cry.

"The captain kem to see her, an' tould her he was very sorry an' all that, an' said he was doin' all he could to get the father out ov jail again. An' sure she was believin' him right enough till her sweetheart, Hugh Dillon, tould her he found out all about the captain's schame, an' what the whole intintion was.

"An' then me bould Hugh med a plan for circumvintin' the captain, an' tould his sweetheart how she was to carry it out. She was to listen to all the captain said, an' dhraw him on till he'd ax her again to marry him.

"Then she was to say that she would never think o' marryin' while her father was in prison, an' then when the captain would offer to do his best to have the father relaised, as they guessed he would, she was not to refuse him, but to ax him to call the next day or so for a decision.

"What Hugh Dillon had in his head was to get the captain to make a promise in public that he couldn't well go back of 'ithout dishonouring himself, for mind yiz, the captain, bad as he was in most ways, had some good points about him, an' wance the promise was

gev Hugh kenw he'd be able to hould him to it.

"So the girl, the crathure, did as she was tould, an' it wasn't long till the captain ups an' axes her the second time.

" 'I couldn't intertain the idaya o' marry-in', ' sez she, ' an me poor father lyin' in Trim Jail.'

" 'All the more raison, me darlin', why y'ought to get marrit,' answered the captain, 'for now's the time,' says he, 'you want a good protector.'

" 'Thank ye kindly,' sez she, 'for th' offer, an' I'll considher it, an' if you'll call again to-morra evenin' I'll give you me decision.'

"The next day, well an' good, me bould captain called, an' instead of the young lady bein' by herself, as he expected, he found a lot of her friends around her, an' amongst them, lookin' innocent an' quiet enough, was young Hugh Dillon.

'Before the captain had time to say much the girl turned to her friends, and sez she— 'The gallant captain here honoured me yesterday by the offer of his hand in marriage, an' offer,' sez she 'that I'm inclined to accept under certain conditions. Our friend the captain has, if I don't make a mistake, enough intherest with the gover'ment to get me father out ov jail, an' on th' condition that he gets me father free I'l marry him an' welkim; but mind,' sez she, an' she blushin' terrible all the time, 'the captain here 'll have to be

the first to bring th' message in me father's own writin' that he's a free man, an' if any other man brings the message before him to me in this house, why then I'll marry him instead o' th' captain,' an' as she said that her eyes met Hugh's, an' he blushed a bit, too.

"Well, bedad, the captain took up the conditions, an' said he'd do his best to get the ould man out o' jail, an' said if he wasn't the first to bring her the message if the prisoner was released afther his trial he'd say no more to the girl about marryin'.

'In about three weeks' time the thrial was fixed to take place, an' I can tell yez there was great excitement about it in the neighbourhood. The most o' th' people knew well enough that it was th' captain got th' ould squire into jail, an' iv coorse they knew he could aisily get him out again iv he liked.

"Th' only doubt th' people had in their minds was whether the captain would thry an' get him relaised or not, for Hugh Dillon's plan to circumvent the captain was gettin' whispered about, an' if the captain heard it iv coorse the game was all up.

"Hugh's plan was simple enough. He intinded to be at the thrial, an' as soon as the ould man was set free he would ask him to do the same favour for him as he did for the captain, an' just write on a slip of paper a message to his daughter sayin' he was a free man again, an' as Dillon

had a horse that nothin' 'ithin the four says of Ireland could touch for gallopin', ov coorse it would be aisy for him to bate the captain's horse an' get to Monaghara first wid the message.

"Well, if Hugh Dillon thought he was goin' to make a fool ov the captain like that he was greatly mistaken, an' he got a terrible surprise when the day before the thril the captain rides up to his place wid two or three others like himself, an', 'Me good friend,' sez he to Dillon, 'I'm in want iv a horse, an' I believe you've one to suit me.'

"'I've no horse for sale,' sez Hugh.

"'Whether you have or not,' says the captain, 'I'm goin' to buy your chestnut hunter, an' here's the price accordin' to Act o' Parliament,' an' wid that he handed Hugh a ten-pound note.

"Well, Hugh nearly went mad with rage, an' threw the ten-pound note on the ground, but the captain only laughed, an' wid his companions he went an' took the horse out o' th' stable an' brought him away. You see there was a law them times that if a Protestant offered a Catholic ten pounds for a horse, supposin' the horse was the best in Ireland, the Catholic had to sell to him.

"So there was no help for poor Hugh. His horse was gone, an' there was every chance of his sweetheart bein' taken away from him, too.

"He rambled about the fields for two or

three hours thryin' to think what he could do. He thought of goin' to the captain's place an' shootin' the horse, but that id only get him into sayrious throuble, an' for his sisther's sake he didn't want that. Then he thought of goin' to Trim an' sendin' out a carrier pigeon wid the message, but that id be no use, as he wouldn't be the first man to bring the message to his sweetheart, an' all kinds of things were runnin' through his brain till he was nearly distracted, an' har'ly minded where he was goin' till he kem to a field where a lot o' th' boys wor hurlin'.

"As soon as he saw them he gev a shout, an' commenced jumpin' the same as if he was gone mad clane an' clever, an' all the hurlers gev up playin' an' gother around him, an' then when he spoke to them for a few minits everywan o' them took up their jackets an' their camans an' ran from the field as fast as their legs id carry them.

"The next mornin' the thrial kem on, an' just as everybody expected the ould squire was relaised, an' it wasn't long till the captain got the little bit o' writin' he wanted to win the girl with.

"While the thrial was goin' on he looked around several times for Hugh Dillon, but couldn't see him anywhere, so the captain laughed to himself at the way he outwitted him.

"It wasn't long, you may be sure, till the captain was in the saddle gallopin' off to

Monaghgara, an' calculatin' to cover the distance of eight miles or so in less than half an hour on Hugh's powerful hunter.

"As he galloped along he saw no other horseman, an' was delighted wid himself all out, for his own cleverness in winnin' the lovely heiress. He didn't pay much attintion to some hurlers that he saw in the fields outside Trim, but as he wint gallopin' along he thought it quare to see hurlers in lonely, out-o'-the-way places along the road. When he kem at last to Monaghgara there wor two or three groups o' hurlers on the lawn, an' at the hall door who was standin' but Hugh Dillon, with a caman restin' on wan arm an' his sweetheart, the squire's daughter, on th' other.

"The captain jumped off his horse, an' took the paper out of his pocket. 'Here's your father's message,' sez he, 'an' I now claim your hand accordin' to our conthract.'

"'You're late, captain,' sez the girl, an' she laughin', 'for Mr. Dillon handed me this message from my father more than ten minutes ago,' and she pulled out a paper which Hugh before had cut out of a hurlin' ball that was lyin' on the steps o' the door.

"'It's a forgery,' sez the captain, an' he gettin' terrible mad, 'for nobody could bate the rate I galloped here at.'

"'Don't be too sure o' that,' sez Hugh, quietly. 'That bit o' paper was got from th' squire by a friend o' mine two or three minutes afther you got yours. In a few

seconds it was sewn up in a hurlin' ball, and wid th' quick hittin' of a long line of the Monaghgara and Monaghmeen hurlers it came to me, the last man of the line stretchin' from here to Trim, before you were much more than half way on the road, an' so havin' been the first to give the message to the young lady, I think you must admit I've fairly won her as my bride.'

"The captain was bet fair an' square, an' though he was bilin' over wid rage, he rode away 'ithout sayin' another word.

"Well, yous may depend upon it there was great rejoicin' when th' ould squire kem home, an' the fun that took place then was nothin' to the divarshun they had later on when Hugh Dillon married the daughter.

"An' by reason o' th' way the hurlers sent th' message in the ball that won his bride for him. Hugh Dillon gev up the ould crest of his family, an' took the wan yous see on this button."

"A very good idaya, too," observed Patsey Hogan, who had listened with evident interest, "but what's the mainin' o' th' Latin words"

"Latin, indeed," said Jack, with an air of contempt, "'tis time you larned the language of your own country."

CORPORAL COLLINS.

“ KNOCKED out ‘ the black Diamond,’ did you say, sergeant? ”

“ Yes, sir ! So Sergeant Price, of the Hussars, told me this morning, and, more than that, he also said as how Captain Durham made an offer of a ten-pound note to the man who could secure Collins as a recruit for the Hussars, for with such a splendid chap to wear their colours in the ring he thinks their regiment could easily win the challenge belt.”

Lieutenant Brompton of the Fifth Fencibles, pulled at his little moustache for some seconds, as if endeavouring to draw inspiration or wisdom therefrom, while Sergeant William Granger, of the same regiment, at the distance of a few paces, respectfully awaited the result of the operation.

“ That’s the idea, is it, sergeant? ” said the young lieutenant, after he had given sufficient time to reflection and moustache-pulling.

“ Yes, sir, that’ Captain Durham’s idea,” and Sergeant Granger watched his officer narrowly.

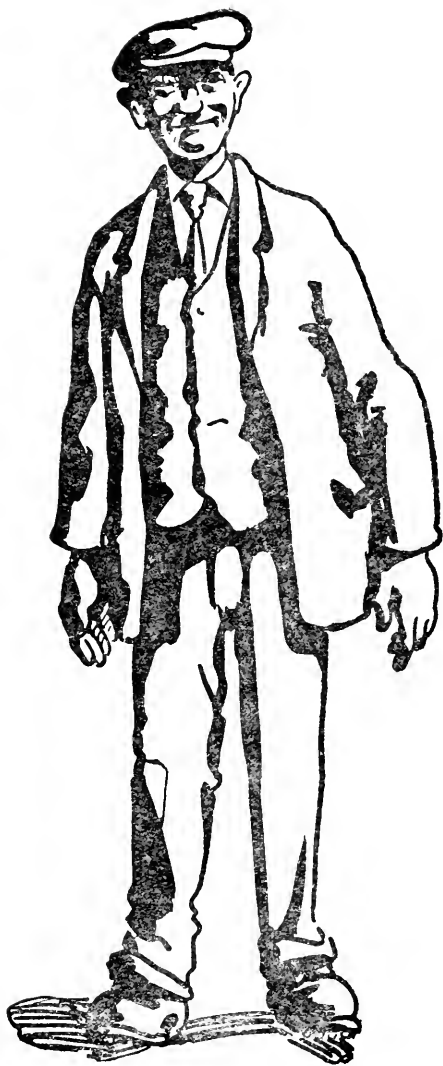
“ Well, Granger, I have no fault to find with the idea; it is, in fact, one which might

be acted upon in our own regiment, and if this young countryman is worth ten pounds to the Hussars he is worth the same amount to us. Now tell me all you know concerning this rough diamond from the country who beat the famous 'Black Diamond'—gave him an extra cut and polish, so to speak." And the young lieutenant complimented his own wit by a laugh, in which it is almost needless to remark, the subordinate joined.

"Well, sir," answered Sergeant Granger, "when I heard of 'the Black Diamond' 'avin' bin beatin' by a country chap yesterday I made it my business—knowin' as how our regiment could do with a good boxin' man—to make all necessary inquiries, and what I finds out that this here young chap happens to be in Smithfield market attending to his master's business (he is a farmer's servant), when the 'Black Diamond' and some of his pals comes along and interfered with the horses he had charge of, and started pokin' fun at himself.

"After a lot of exasperating and annoying tactics on the part of the city bully, the country bloke seemed to lose his temper, and told the champion that if he didn't go about his business he'd make him.

"There was great sport then, I believe, at the idea of a country chap threatening the city champion, and by way of giving him a lesson the 'Black Diamond,' to the delight of all his pals, got the countryman into a quiet yard,



Corporal Collins

where a ring was soon formed by the expectant crowd of loafers who assembled to see the fun.

"But to the surprise of everyone the lesson was the wrong way about," from the 'Black Diamond's' point of view at least, for the clod-hopper knocked him out beautifully with the 'right-hand cross-counter' in the second round. I also discovered that this frieze-coated pugilist is a native of a small village not very many miles from the city, and that he and others in his native place have been taught boxing by some sporting young gentlemen in the neighbourhood."

"He is just the man we want, Granger," said Lieutenant Brompton, "and an effort must be made to secure him. I shall arrange that you are sent recruiting in his direction in the course of a week or so. Meanwhile you will require something for expenses," and the sergeant's hand closed over some coin.

"By the way, Granger, what is this chap's name?"

"Collins, sir! Bat Collins, I believe," answered the sergeant.

"What queer names these Irish have," said the lieutenant, musingly, as he again pulled his moustache. Then, as he made a note in his pocket-book, "Ten pounds to you, Sergeant Granger, on the morning Collins first appears on drill."

Many years have sped since the foregoing dialogue took place in one of the barrack

squares of Dublin, a city in which at that time a keen rivalry existed between the various regiments quartered therein with regard to certain fistic competitions, and consequently many of the sporting officers tried by every possible means compatible with fair play to win the laurels of victory for their particular regiments.

And so it was that, as a result of Lieutenant Brompton's offer to Sergeant Granger, the inhabitants of Shanwalla were surprised about a week later to hear certain strains of martial music borne to their unaccustomed ears from the direction of the Dublin road as a beautiful summer's day was drawing to a close.

There was a hurried rush of young feet up the village street towards the quarter whence the sounds emanated, and as the roll of the drum became louder, and the shrill voices of the fifes sounded nearer, the seniors crowded to their doors, and waited wonderingly for an explanation of the unusual sounds.

They had not long to wait, however, for soon, in all the gorgeous panoply of war, the recruiting party of the Fifth Fencibles swung round the turn known as "Dempsey's Corner," and came marching airily down the centre of the street in what Sergeant Granger—who was in command—considered superb style.

The drummer drummed and the two fifers fided as if it were a matter of life and death to

them, while the sergeant, as he marched along with his gay ribbons fluttering in gallant style, stole confidently expectant glances on each side of the way in hopes of intercepting some of the looks of admiration which he felt must of a necessity be directed towards his goodly form.

Having called a halt, the sergeant soon found his little party the centre of a crowd of villagers, and being anxious to obtain the good will of some of the stalwart fellows whom he saw around him, he graciously invited all who were so disposed to come and take of sundry refreshments at his expense in the village publichouse. Two or three of the older members of the little crowd at once expressed their willingness to accept the invitation, but the younger ones held back, evidently fearful of the well-known consequences of drinking with a "listin' sergeant."

On the way to the publichouse, Sergeant Granger casually asked if a certain Bat Collins was to be found in the village, and, to his supreme delight, was informed that the individual in question made it a point to spend an hour or so in the tap-room every evening, and was almost sure to be there at present.

"He is very clever with his hands, I believe?" said the sergeant, interrogatively.

"Troth, then, you may say that," answered Micky Nolan, who had constituted himself spokesman and general informant, "divil a

better thatcher nor mudwall builder you'd find from here to Derry, an' as for sheep shearin', an'——

"Aye! aye!" said Sergeant Granger, interrupting him, "but that's not exactly what I means, you see. Aint this here Collins a good fighting man?"

"Is it boxin' you mane?" queried Micky Nolan, as he winked slyly at his companions, "why I don't think the batin' iv him is in Ireland," and Micky frowned severely on little Martin Daly, who had just opened his mouth to say something.

By this time the publichouse door was reached, and the warriors and their guests were soon discussing the refreshing beverages of the village bar.

Some hurried whispers and sundry nodding of heads passed between Micky Nolan and his companions, while Sergeant Granger's vision was being more or less devoted to the inside of the huge pewter measure from which he elected to drink his ale, and as a result one of the party slipped quietly away.

"Bat isn't here yit," answered Micky Nolan, observing a questioning glance as he finished his drink, "but there's a message gone across to him that there's somewan here axin' for him, an' I'll engage it won't be long till you see him here, especially if you'd bring the band out an' give us another tune or two."

Nothing loth to follow up the good im-

pression which he believed had been made by himself and his party, Sergeant Granger formed his band—as Micky Nolan designated the two fifers and drummer—outside the house of entertainment, and, having given the necessary commands, commenced another military progress over the quiet street of Shanwalla.

When this had been satisfactorily concluded, and several others enticed to the publichouse as a consequence, the gallant sergeant had the satisfaction of hearing Micky Nolan whisper as they again were being served with drinks at the bar. “He’s here all right now, sergeant, inside in the tap-room takin’ a dhrop o’ porther.”

“Very good! Very good!” said Granger, delightedly, “I want to have a chat with him as soon as possible; come along and introduce me.”

Micky at once led the way to the tap-room, in one corner of which two or three men were seated with their legs underneath a large deal table on which various drinking vessels were disposed.

“Bat,” said Micky, addressing one of the group, “here’s the captain here wants to have a chat wid you.”

“Wid me?” queried a stalwart-looking young fellow of about twenty, who sat in the centre of the group, with an air of evident surprise.

“Yes,” said the sergeant, as he advanced

with outstretched hand, "that is if you're Bat Collins."

"Begor, an' that's me name, an' no mistake," answered Bat, as he looked on the officer somewhat inquiringly. "Is it anything particular you want, captain?"

"Only to have the pleasure of shakin' hands with you and of enjoying a few drinks in your company. I heard all about how you knocked out the 'Black Diamond.' "

"See that, now," said Micky Nolan, as he gazed around the tap-room with a peculiar glance. "Here's the captain heard all about Bat batin' the Dublin bully, an' I'll warrant he'd give more than a shillin' to have a boy like Bat in his regiment. Eh, captain?" And Micky laughed at his own cleverness, while the sergeant looked a trifle confused for a moment or two.

"Here, landlord." shouted the sergeant, as he took his seat at the table beside Bat, "I'm goin' to order drinks for everyone in honour of the man who beat the 'Black Diamond.' "

"Hurrah for Shanwalla an' the sky over it!" cried some prospective drinker from the rear of the rapidly-increasing crowd which was fast filling the tap-room. "We'll all drink Bat Collins's health, that we will."

"Wouldn't he make a fine sojer, now, captain?" said Micky Nolan, in an insinuating tone, to the sergeant. "An it's only last

week I heerd him say he'd half a mind to 'list."

"Well, if he has any intention that way," said the sergeant, jumping at the opening thus made, "he could not do better than join our regiment."

"Sorra much I care whether I 'list or not," said the subject of the discourse rather carelessly, as he tossed off the contents of a foaming tankard. "I'm nearly tired of the hard work I get here from wan year's end to th' other."

Becoming confident of success, the gallant sergeant jubilantly ordered that every person present might again be supplied with drinks at his expense, and was not without hopes that more than one recruit might be obtained when the liquor commenced to assert its potency.

Thinking the moment opportune, Sergeant Granger commenced expatiating on the many attractions of his regiment in a most enthusiastic manner, painted in glowing terms the benefits to be obtained by recruits, promised a corporal's stripe to Bat within three weeks, and was preparing to formally enlist Collins when his ear caught the well-known sounds of fife and drum in the village street, and rushing to the door to find if his band had so far forgotten itself as to start marching without him, he exposed himself to the view of Sergeant Price, of the Hussars, who was in the act of halting his recruiting party opposite the publichouse.

"Hello! Granger," shouted Price, as he advanced to meet him. "Trying to steal a march on us, eh?"

"Yes; and I've got my man, too, so you're late."

"Oh, we'll see about that very soon, my friend," said the Hussar, as he pushed his way into the tap-room, where, recognising Bat, he at once seated himself beside him.

"Has he enlisted you?" were his first words, as he inclined his head in the direction of Granger.

"Well, not exactly," answered Bat, slowly, "but I was just a-makin' up my mind to take the shillin' when you kem up."

"He's as good as promised me," interrupted Sergeant Granger, "and it is most unfair of you to interfere, Price."

"Who found him out first?" queried the Hussar sergeant, excitedly, "and who tried to steal a march on us? You have not enlisted him yet, and I've as good a claim on him as you have."

"Bat, will you join the horse-sojers or the foot-sojers?" queried Micky Nolan, exultantly. "Begor, they're fallin' over aich other thryin' to get you, an' you're as good as a corplar this minit, man."

"Aisy! aisy, now gintlemen," said Bat, addressing the two sergeants, who were evidently preparing to fall foul of each other over the coveted recruit. "Just sit down here quiet an' aisy, an' we'll talk the whole matther

over, an' if I can't decide which o' the two rigimints I'll join, why yiz can dhraw lots for me to settle the bizniz, but, mind this, I'm to be med a corplar at wanst."

"Certainly, certainly," said the two sergeants, almost in the same breath, "you can consider yourself a corplar from this moment."

"That's purty quick promotion, anyway," said Bat, as he glanced around with a peculiar smile, "an' I not past the docthor yit."

"Oh, there's little fear of you being rejected by the doctor," said Sergeant Granger, with a laugh."

"Very well, then, I'm a corplar," said Bat, "an' the only throuble is to know which regiment I'll join, and before I start talkin' to yiz about the ins and outs of the horse-sojers an' foot-sojers I'll take the liberty o' sendin' out for some o' me relations to have a few dhrinks before I take the shillin'."

"Certainly, certainly," again assented the gallant sergeants, each, in his anxiety to capture Bat, promising to entertain all he wished to invite.

The result of this generosity on the part of the rival sergeants was soon apparent, for so nobly did the friends and relations of Bat Collins respond to the invitation which was promptly conveyed to them that Charlie Dignam's house was soon taxed to its utmost capacity.

It was also remarked by some of the older

inhabitants present, who had hitherto prided themselves on their knowledge of the pedigrees and relationships of the various families in Shanwalla, that the relations of Bat Collins were far more numerous than they had ever before suspected. With regard to this revelation they remained, however, discreetly silent.

"Now, Bat!" commenced Micky Nolan, when the new comers had been served twice over at the expense of the two sergeants, "are you goin' to join the foot-sojers or the horse-sojers, because if I was you——"

"Aisy, Misther Nowlan," interrupted the recruit in a severe tone; "none of your Battin to me. I'm Corplar Collins, iv you please, an' wid regard to me rigimint, that'll have to be settled between me an' me brother officers," and Bat indicated the rival sergeants with a sweep of his hand.

A general laugh ran around the company at this display of military dignity, which Bat at once silenced by thumping the table violently with his fist, and asking fiercely who they were laughing at.

"All right, corplar! All right!" said Micky Nolan, penitently, "we didn't mane to hurt yer feelin's."

Bat appeared somewhat mollified, and having listened for some time in silence as the recruiting sergeants vied with each other in lauding their respective regiments, slowly emptied his tankard, gazed into it for some moments in a contemplative manner, and then

suddenly turning to the representatives of the army, said—"There's no use in yiz makin' yorselves hoarse talkin'. I'll tell yiz what I'll do. I'll toss up for it wid this penny," and Bat produced the coin.

"A head for the horse and a harp for the foot, an' whoever wins me to stan' another dhrink to me relations."

"Agreed!" cried both sergeants, who were now becoming somewhat influenced by their potations, and anxious to have the matter settled without delay.

The coin was tossed, resulting in a win for Sergeant Granger and the foot.

Thereupon that delighted officer handed Bat the shilling necessary for the transaction, and proclaimed him duly enlisted.

"I'll engage you haven't another man in the rigimint like him," whispered Micky Nolan in the ear of the partially-intoxicated but wholly triumphant sergeant, "an' he'll make a morthial good sojer, because you might run a pin, or a knife, or a bay'net for that matther into him an' he'll never feel it."

"Now, then, my man," said Sergeant Granger in a fierce whisper to Micky, "do you think you're talkin' to a fool?"

"Troth, then, I don't think any such thing, captain," answered Micky, "but if you don't believe me yo can watch me while I stick this big pin into him."

"But mind," added Micky impressively, "I mustn't let him see me, because he doesn't

like everywan to know about his want ov feelin', an' so I'll slip undher the table unknownst, an' if you watch you'll see me dhrive this into his leg."

Micky's demonstration was quite successful, and Sergeant Granger could hardly bring himself to believe the testimony of his own eyes, when the pin was driven deep into one of Bat's legs without producing the slightest effect upon the recruit.

"He is really a wonderful chap," Sergeant Granger took the opportunity of explaining to Sergeant Price a few moments later, "and will be a great acquisition to our regiment; fancy the peculiar quality he possesses."

"I don't believe it," growled Sergeant Price. "Somebody's been a telling of you lies."

"Wha—at, you don't believe it," said his successful rival in rather unsteady accents; "you just observe me."

"The man is drunk or mad," thought Sergeant Price, as he saw Granger take in his fingers the same demonstrator of painlessness which Micky Nolan had used, and sidle up to where Corporal Collins was seated in the midst of his friends—and valedictory expressions, more or less coherent.

Stooping swiftly, the gallant sergeant embedded the pin in the corporal's most convenient leg, which, it may be remarked, was not the limb upon which Micky Nolan had experimented

A roar which would have done credit to a bull was the result, with the accompanying circumstance of Sergeant Granger being ignominiously stretched upon the floor by a backward sweep of Bat's powerful right arm.

In a moment all was confusion. The table and forms were upset, tankards clashed upon the floor, and glasses were smashed, while not a little of their contents found a resting-place upon the body of the prostrate warrior.

In a trice Sergeant Price and the other soldiers present flew to the assistance of Granger, and what promised to be an ugly incident in the history of Shanwalla was apparently about to take place.

There was a momentary lull as Bat Collins tenderly withdrew the sergeant's weapon from his leg, and what would have followed it is impossible to conjecture had not the door of the tap-room been suddenly opened at this juncture, revealing the sturdy form of Father MacGowan in the doorway.

"What is the meaning of this disgraceful conduct?" he asked, eyeing the assemblage severely.

"Nothin', yer reverence," mumbled Micky Nolan in a shamefaced manner, "only that the captain here"—and he pointed to Sergeant Granger, who had risen—"was brandin' Corplar Collins afther he had 'listed him."

Father MacGowan directed an inquiring glance towards Bat, who, doffing his hat to

the priest, looked anxiously at a side door through which his numerous relatives were disappearing as rapidly as circumstances would permit.

"Do you mean to say you have enlisted?" Father MacGowan asked.

"Yis, yer reverence," answered Bat, somewhat less abashed; "he listed me an' med me a corplar," and he nodded his head in Granger's direction.

Father MacGowan turned towards Granger, saying, "You've allowed this man to impose upon you somehow. Do you know he has a cork leg?"

Poor Granger's face was a study. Here was an inglorious termination to his mission. Time and money wasted on one who could not be the man he had intended to secure.

As well as he could he told of the quest upon which he had come.

"You are a week too late," said Father MacGowan, with a quiet smile. "Bat Collins, your precious corporal's first cousin, who resembles him very closely, is the man you wanted. He left six days ago for America, where I trust he will meet with as much success as he could hope to find in your regiment. And now, corporal," he continued, turning to the recruit, "get up and go home at once, and don't let me find you creating such disgraceful scenes here again."

By this time Bat was the only one left of the civilian portion of the company (Micky

Nolan having been the last to escape by the side door), and having arisen from his seat he limped out of the room, but not before giving a mock military salute to the sergeant, who had previously satisfied himself that Bat really possessed a cork leg.

"You have been badly duped, my friends," said Father MacGowan, addressing the military when Bat had gone. "Your eagerness has overleaped your discretion, and you have also had too much drink. Now, as something to eat must be needed by you, come up to my house, and old Betty will provide you with some supper so that you may be strengthened for your march back to town."

"Not a drum was heard" when the military evacuated Shanwalla some time later (after Father MacGowan's fare had been partaken of), and instead of the merry sounds of the fifes those who listened heard only the recriminatory tones of the rival sergeants as they marched sadly away.

For many years afterwards a living memento of the visit of the military limped over the street of Shanwalla in the person of him who from thenceforward was known as "Corporal Collins."

PATSEY HOGAN'S WATCH.

PATSEY HOGAN, the thatcher, was the person responsible for its introduction to Shanwalla, and because of the fact his name remains associated with the watch to the present moment.

Patsey was in his twentieth year when he purchased it, and made what he considered the bargain of a life-time, but seeing that he had several times previously visited the capital he should really have known better than to buy it.

This, however, is a matter of opinion, and opinions often alter.

Patsey Hogan's did.

In his twentieth year Patsey had no burning desire of emulating the saints, or in fact of being otherwise than an ordinary mortal, at least as far as moderate temptation was concerned.

He met with his trial in the streets of Dublin, in the shape of a "wooden-legged sailor wid wan eye," as he confessed in after years, and succumbed ingloriously.

"Eh, young fella," said the sailor, accosting Patsey in a low voice, and with a guarded expression on his countenance, "would you

like to buy somethin' nice to bring home wid you? "

" Gwan owre that an' don't be botherin' me," was Patsey's rejoinder.

" Botherin' you, is it? " said the mariner, as he glanced cautiously on every side, " would it be much iv a bother iv you could get that chape? " and as he spoke he allowed Patsey a fleeting glance at a rather peculiar looking watch.

" What d'ye call chape? " asked Patsey, cautiously.

" Just come aside here into this quiet alley, an' take the dimenshuns ov it, till you get an idea of the bargain you're offered, before I tell you the price."

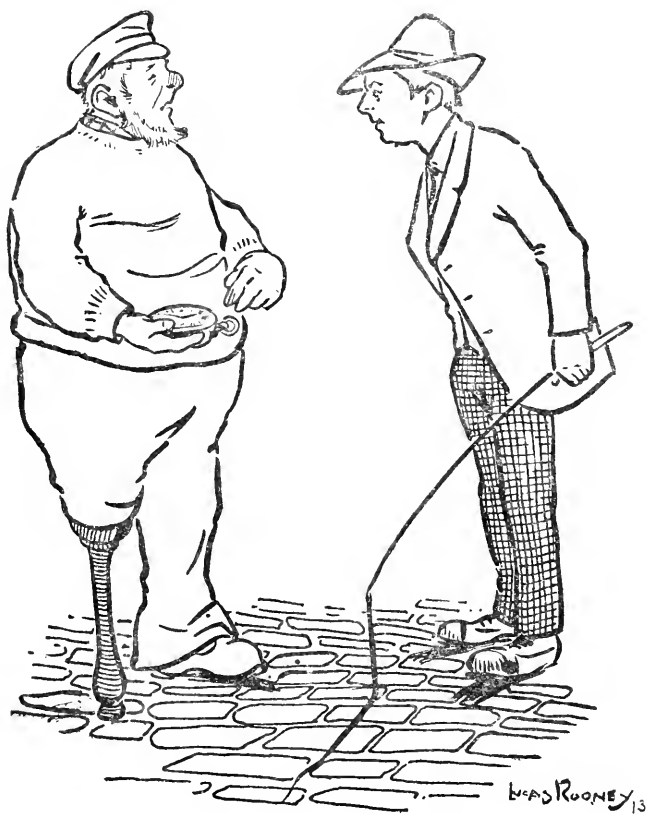
" Why can't you show it to me here? " asked Patsey, rather suspiciously.

" Do you take me for a *gomeril** all out, my man; there's too many eyes about this sthreet, an' I wid no licence; can't you come across to th' alley an' take th' advantage I'm givin' you, just because I can see you're a daicint counthry boy that could carry and look after a watch all right."

" What's the use o' me lookin' at it? " said Patsey as he turned over a half-sovereign and three half-crowns in his right-hand trouser pocket, and erroneously reflected that a watch couldn't be bought for less than a couple of sovereigns.

" Whisper," said the sailor, in a most con-

* *Gomeril* = A fool



"I must get rid of it at wanst"

fidential manner, as he heard the clink of the coins. "I must get rid of it at wanst, an' as I got it rather aisy, you can have it dirt chape, an' all you'll have to do is to keep quiet an' tell nobody about it. Come on across an' take a look at it, man."

Patsey finally consented to accompany the sailor to the quiet alley, with the result that after some wonderful descriptions of the virtues of the article offered for sale, and correspondingly wonderful reductions in the price asked after each description, as Patsey showed signs of moving away, the sailor actually offered to sacrifice the watch for seventeen and sixpence (the entire sum in Patsey's possession, as he had admitted), and Patsey, jumping at the opportunity, secured the watch.

Some hours later he took the road to Shanwalla with a happy heart, though his purse was light and his stomach empty, for his entire exchequer had been exhausted in buying the treasure, which now reposed snugly in the inside pocket of his sleeve waistcoat.

More than once on the homeward road he reined in the horse he was driving, and having looked around carefully to see he was unobserved, produced his newly-acquired property, and having thoroughly examined it, restored it to its resting-place with a feeling of satisfaction, and resumed his journey with a cheery whistle, which proclaimed the buoyancy of his spirits.

Patsey had little experience of watches, and though he felt the one which rested in his pocket to be a bit heavy, and noted that in appearance it was much larger than any watch he had seen before, flattered himself with the idea that he had got bulk for his money, and after all what did its size matter to a strong young fellow like himself, who was well able to carry it.

At the first opportunity he tested the correctness of the time as indicated by it, and, as a consequence, at once acquired a confidence in it as a timekeeper.

When about a mile from home the sun was descending behind the crest of Mullaghara, and Patsey, observing this, and having a good idea of the hour, because of it, consulted his watch, and found that the sun was fairly correct.

When he arrived at home, however, difficulties began to confront him, which, in his anxiety to secure the wonderful watch, were undreamed of earlier in the day, and when his mother asked him where were the pair of new boots he had declared his intention of buying ere he set out, he was forced to resort to lies to explain their non-appearance.

With the best air he could assume he explained that he spent some of his money on "a few little things," which, when asked to nominate, he could not, much to his mother's disgust, who gave her opinion of him freely to the effect that he'd never have "an ounce o'

sense," and expressed her firm belief that he met some "good boys" in Dublin an' spent his "hard airnin's on them."

As "the tay" was being prepared for Patsey his mother kept up a running fire of comments with regard to his character, all of which went to show that she did not repose a vast amount of confidence in the wisdom of her son.

Patsey winced as he listened, but believing in the old axiom that "a shut mouth never said evil," he remained discreetly silent and devoted all his attention to the proper disposition of the meal which was placed before him.

Truth to tell, the feeling of satisfaction which had filled his breast as he came down the Dublin road was fast evaporating, and a feeling quite the reverse was taking its place.

He tried to soothe his conscience with the reflection that the money he had spent was his own; he had earned it, and he could do as he liked with it, and with regard to buying a watch, which was sold suspiciously cheap—well, if he didn't buy it someone else would.

The pair of boots which he had "saved up" for were beyond his reach at present, but "th'ould wans" would do for a while longer, and even if he had to go barefoot that was his own lookout, and his mother "mightn't be troublin'."

But then his mother had trusted in his good sense, and as far as she knew he had failed in

proving he possessed such a quality, and, what made the reflection more bitter, not for the first time either.

If his mother only knew what a treasure he had got stowed away in the pocket of his sleeve waistcoat "maybe she wouldn't argify so much," and if she were aware that he was the possessor of a timepiece, such as no member of the family had previously boasted, she might not feel so much inclined to call him a fool, but then seeing the sailor had almost sworn him to secrecy he could not very well impart the information which might restore him to the good opinions of his widowed mother.

The sailor, when Patsey completed the purchase, had darkly hinted that it would be as much as his liberty was worth to let anyone know he was possessed of the watch, as it had not been obtained in a proper manner, and the "polis" were on the look out for it.

It was then too late for Patsey to retreat, but as his mother spoke to him later on, the satisfaction that he had erstwhile felt at having secured such a bargain became overshadowed by the conviction that he was little better than a thief, and so as he sat in his little home in Shanwalla he listened meekly to his mother's homily, and drank his tea with an air of genuine criminality.

Half the glory of his purchase was gone. In the first place he had bought an article which, whatever his first opinion was, subse-

quent reflection led him to believe had been stolen, and the detection of which, in his possession, would mean loss of character, and possibly a month or two in prison; and in the second place, even if this were not so, he had kept the purchase a secret from his mother, and should she discover what he had done there would be a row between them, the very thought of which Patsey dared not entertain. As Patsey continued his meal his mother's tongue gradually relaxed in its declamatory efforts, and as the cups and saucers ceased to clatter an awkward silence ensued.

Awkward, because with the cessation of the noises referred to one of a different sort put forth its claims to be heard, and with such good effect that Patsey upset the cup of tea, while Mrs. Hogan put up her hands with the pious ejaculation: "God bless us, Patsey, did you hear that?"

"No, mother," answered the widow's son, as he rattled his tea-spoon against the side of his tea-cup. "What was it?"

"Stop makin' that noise, an' listen," Mrs. Hogan said, peremptorily, as she held up her hand in an impressive manner.

Patsey was compelled to stop, and as he did so he again heard all too plainly the sound which had previously confused him to the overturning of his tea-cup.

His mother's quick ears had also caught the unwonted sound in Hogan's kitchen, and looking on her son, she said, in a solemn

whisper, "Don't you hear it now, Patsey, avic?"

"I don't hear anythin', mother," said Patsey, determined to brazen it out.

Worse an' worse, Patsey, avic, when only one of us can hear it; it's plain enough in me ears this very minit, an' it's nothin' else but the death-watch, just the same as I heard it before your poor father died—the Lord ha' mercy on his sowl."

"Arrah, don't be talkin' nonsense, mother; I often heard you say that no wan ought to b'lieve in them ould *pishogues*,* an' what's more, I heard you agreecin' wid Mrs. Boylan only a few weeks ago that maybe it was the docthor's watch you heard then when he was in attendin' on me father—God rest him."

Maybe so, maybe so, Patsey, but there's no docthor her' now, an' no watch in the house."

Patsey, not knowing what to answer, sipped his tea in silence, and, leaning forward, pressed that portion of his raimant which held the watch against the table in the vain hope of suppressing the obtrusive tick! tick! tick! of the watch, which sounded with most annoying distinctness in his ears.

"There it is again! There it is again! Don't you hear it now, Patsey?" and the woman looked in her son's face appealingly.

Patsey jumped up from his unfinished meal, exclaiming: "Hould aisy, mother, I think I

* *Pishogues* = Superstitions.

know what it is," and rushing out, he returned in a few seconds with a small twig in his hand broken from a hawthorn bush which grew at the back of the cottage. "There y'are, mother, he exclaimed, triumphantly, as he threw the twig on the fire; "there's what was makin' the noise hittin' agen the back windy wud the breeze. I heard it myself a few nights ago, so I knew what it was."

Patsey finished his meal, and as Mrs. Hogan heard no more mysterious sounds she was apparently satisfied that it was the twig she had heard on the window-pane, and not the death-watch as she had imagined, and so when her son rose and went towards the door she offered no objection to him leaving her alone.

As soon as Patsey went outside he sought the spot where he had hidden the watch—when previously he rushed out to break the falsely-accused bramble—and having restored it to the pocket of his sleeve waistcoat, set off across the fields to see his sweetheart, Mary Daly.

Once in the presence of his sweetheart, Patsey was fast forgetting the little troubles which had beset him previously, when Mary innocently remarked:

"You wor in Dublin to-day, Patsey."

Patsey Hogan felt the blood rushing to his face as he mumbled an affirmative, remembering that some evenings since he had promised to bring home some little present from the city.

"You're not long home, are you?" asked Mary, evidently not noticing his confusion, and running her eyes over her sweetheart's form, as if she expected to see some of his pockets bulging with the promised present.

"Not too long, Mary."

"An' I suppose you bought a lot o' nice things in Dublin?"

Patsey felt his position keenly, and paused, considering how he could best explain his neglect.

As he did so the tick, tick, tick of the watch became painfully manifest.

He hastened to speak in order to drown the sound of his troublesome possession, and in his anxiety made his position more awkward.

"I didn't forget you, Mary, acushla, an' I was goin' to buy some little present for you, only I spent all me money on somethin' else."

"Oh, did you?" said Mary, with a somewhat incredulous look, "a present for somebody, I suppose."

"Why, then, no," answered Patsey.

"You needn't make a saycret of it. It's something for Nora M'Grath, I suppose?"

"Nora M'Grath, indeed! Don't you know I'd twice rather have you, Mary?"

"Well, won't you tell me what it was you spent all your money on?" said Mary, somewhat mollified, yet anxious to satisfy her curiosity.

"Don't ax me, Mary, agra, I can't tell anywan."

"Oh, if you can't trust me, ov coorse, you needn't tell me."

"But, Mary, don't you understand?"

"No, I don't."

A pause ensued, and again the ticking of the watch was heard.

"What noise is that you're makin'?" asked Mary, sharply, "you needn't be thryin' to make fun o' me."

"I'm not thryin' to make fun o' you, Mary, darlin'."

"Well, don't be click! clicken! wid your tongue like a woman callin' chickens."

"That's my heart you hear beatin' again my ribs for the fair love o' you," hazarded Patsey, in a mad attempt to retrieve his lost ground.

"Them's the lies rattlin' agen your teeth in their hurry to get out of your mouth, Patsey Hogan," saying which Mary Daly turned sharply on her heel, and passing from the presence of her discomfited sweetheart, was soon under the shelter of her father's roof-tree.

"Bad luck to it for a watch, anyway," muttered Patsey Hogan, as he stood disconsolate, and saw his sweetheart flee from his presence. "I believe there's some kind of a curse on it."

When Patsey again reached the street of Shanwalla it was quite dark, and as there was a cheery glow from the open door of Brian Boylan's forge he resolved to enter and spend some time in the company of those whose

animated conversation and hearty peals of laughter could be heard over the roaring of the bellows and the clanging of the anvil.

Here at least was noise enough to drown the sound of twenty watches, thought Patsey, as he entered.

But misfortune still seemed to dog his path.

He had scarcely been five minutes in the forge when the conversation suddenly flagged, and then ceased altogether.

As Brian had stopped hammering iron and blowing the bellows, a peculiar sound was at once heard by some of the sharp ears present, and while they were puzzling themselves to account for it, Patsey Hogan slouched away like a felon from amongst them.

As he neared his home Patsey carefully reconnoitred the premises, and having deposited the watch in the hiding place he had used before, he essayed entering.

His mother was preparing to retire for the night, and when eventually she had done so Patsey waited for over an hour ere he dared attempt to bring his unlucky watch into the house again.

As Patsey's bedroom was on the side of the kitchen furthest removed from the room in which the mother slept, he had no fear of her hearing the supposed death-watch again, even if she were awake.

So he boldly hung the watch on a big nail in the wall opposite his bed, so that he would be able to see the time when he awoke.

"It has a thremenjis loud tick, an' no mistake," muttered Patsey to himself, as he composed himself to sleep; "it must be a thunderin' sthrong timekeeper, but the strength ov it 'll be the ruination ov me unless I never go next or near anywan, for as sure as I do they'll hear it tickin', as me mother an' Mary an' others heard it this evenin'."

Meanwhile, in the silence of the night, the watch was making gallant efforts to make itself heard in the remotest corner of the house.

Jumping out of bed, Patsey took it from off the nail and stowed it away as far back as he could in the drawer of the table, which stood in a corner of the room. Having done this he returned to his couch.

As he again composed himself to sleep the events of the day passed before him, and he felt miserable because of the rows he had had with his mother and sweetheart.

"Dickens take the watch," he half muttered; "If it wasn't that it was worth so much money I'd throw it away, for I b'lieve it's unlucky."

As if a demon were in the watch, who was determined to annoy and worry the owner because of the half-expressed uncomplimentary opinion, the "tick," "tick," "tick" of the timepiece sounded in Patsey's ears with a greater vehemence than heretofore.

For a while he lay and listened as the sounds seemed to increase in volume, and finally, unable to withstand the noise, he again

arose, and having wrapped several articles of clothing around the watch, he replaced it in the drawer, and again lay down upon his bed.

Not to sleep, however. Tick! tick! tick! came the sound of the irrepressible watch, with seemingly infernal insistence, while the unlucky owner tossed from side to side in his bed with counterpane and blankets over his head in the vain endeavour to shut out the sound.

As a last resort he stuffed some wool in his ears, but to little purpose, as still while he dozed came the ceaseless tick! tick! tick! sufficiently loud to prevent him from sinking into a proper sleep.

It was long past midnight when Patsey arose in desperation, and taking the watch in his hand, stole cautiously forth and deposited the instrument of his torture in the hiding place he had previously used.

Having done which, without arousing his mother, he returned to bed, and again sought his much-needed repose.

Sleep came at last, but with it such dreams of wooden-legged sailors, with watches on their shoulders instead of heads, assailing him on every side, that it would, perhaps, have been better for him to have remained awake.

His first thought on awaking was of the watch, and involuntarily he associated it with a story he had heard of a man who bought a bottle, which contained an imp, which he could never get rid of, try as he would.

Perhaps a guilty conscience had a good deal to do with his thoughts. He had bought an article which he believed to be worth ten pounds for three half-crowns and a half-sovereign.

The sailor, now that he recalled the expression of his countenance, was a villainous-looking ruffian, who had probably murdered the original owner.

No, he would not keep it a day longer ! He would take steps to have it restored at once to the rightful owner, and then, even though he had lost all his money, he would have a clear conscience.

Some time after Father MacGowan was informed by his housekeeper that Patsey Hogan wanted to see him.

Having listened to the delinquent's tale, the priest took the enormous watch in his hand, and, having examined it, said gravely :

" So you want this valuable watch returned to its rightful owner "

" I do, your reverence."

" How much do you say you gave for it ? "

" Seventeen and sixpence, your reverence."

" You can conscientiously keep it," said Father MacGowan, with a quiet smile. " I don't think anyone ever paid more for it than you have paid yourself—it cost about ten shillings when it was new."

Some time afterwards Patsey sold the watch to a neighbour for three half-crowns and a pocket-knife, and thought himself well rid of it.

During the succeeding twelve months it changed owners several times, always at a reduced price.

Finally, it vanished from Shanwalla.

Its memory is, however, kept green in the local simile—used as occasion demands—“as strong as Patsey Hogan’s watch.”

THE THREE-CORNERED FIELD.

" I'M goin' to break it up this year an' put in a crap ov oats."

" I wouldn't if I was you; it's sure to turn out unlucky."

" Thank y' kindly for your opinion, Joe, but unlucky or not I'll sow th' oats."

" Plaise yourself," said Joe M'Grath, as he shook his head with an air of conscious wisdom, " but I never knew a crop to thrive in such ground."

" What do y' mane, man? Isn't it good ground that nobody ever remembers to see undher tillage, an' what betther could you have for a crap ov lay oats? "

" It's ould lay, an' the soil's good, everywan in Shanwalla knows that well enough, but there's another thing, an' you know it as well as I do, that it's fairy ground, an' it isn't right to break it."

" That for the fairy ground," said Charlie Dignam, as he snapped his fingers (for it was he who conversed with Joe M'Grath). " I don't care a thraneen for any of them ould pishogues your head is full of."

" All right, Charlie, see your folly out then, as many a man did before you, but I'll houl'

yeh you'll be sorry before you're a year oulder."

"You're talkin' ramaush," said Charlie with a pitying air, "an' in a year's time or less you'll be sorry yeh spoke."

"Maybe so! maybe so!" said M'Grath, as he calmly smoked his pipe, "but time 'll tell, an' the frast 'll thry the praties, as the sayin' is."

Charlie Dignam laughed, and so did one or two of the listeners to the above portion of a conversation which took place in Joe M'Grath's workshop in the springtime of a certain year now long gone past.

"Well, yez may laugh as much as yez like," said the harness-maker a bit testily. "but maybe some o' yez don't know that the 'three-cornered field' (the piece of land under discussion) was wance an' ould pagan buryin' ground."

"Who tould yeh that?" asked Charlie Dignam incredulously.

"I heerd it from me gran'father years ago, an' he saw a jar o' bones dug up in it when he was a lump ov a gossoon."

"I heard somethin' about that meself," said Larry Dempsey with a rather solemn air.

"Well, an' what th' dickens about that?" said the prospective tiller of the soil, with a contemptuous toss of the head, "them was pagans, an' we're Christians, an' if they thought well ov gettin' berrit in fields instead

o' churchyards whose fault is it I'd like to know?"

"Aisy! aisy! Misther Dignam, who tould you there was churchyards in Ireland in them days? An' even though they wor pagans their graves oughn't to be interfaired wid."

"Arrah, man, don't be talkin' such infernal nonsense."

"Nonsense, is it?" said Joe M'Grath heatedly, "it's all very fine to say it's nonsense, but there's more in some o' them ould sayin's than many o' th' fools that's goin' nowadays think. I seen the praties meself that wor dug up out o' Lacy's church field about twenty years ago wid bits o' men's ribs, teeth, an' such like in th' middle o' them."

"How could that be?" said Dignam, with an air of superior knowledge, "doesn't everywan know that a pratie 'll grow where there's stones or bits ov stick or pieces of ould iron in the ground beside it, an' none o' them things ever does be got inside ov a pratie."

"I often heerd them sayin' that that was a merrykil about Lacy's praties," interpolated Patsey Hogan, who had been quietly listening for some time, "just to show that as great a fella' as Lacy thought himself he couldn't do what he liked wid an' ould buryin' place."

"There might a'be merrykils goin' twenty years ago, though I never kem across any, but this I know, divil a wan is likely to take place in regard to the crap ov oats if I take an' sow th' three-cornered field next week or th'

week afther," said Charlie, eyeing Joe M'Grath in a most supercilious manner the while.

As it was apparent that a pursuit of this topic might mean a heated argument between Dignam and M'Grath, one of the company skilfully diverted the conversation into another channel, and the matter was for the time forgotten.

But though he had pretended to take little heed of M'Grath's warning, Charlie Dignam, who was not without a strong dash of the superstitious in his moral make-up, felt more impressed by what the harness-maker had said than he would have cared to admit, and later, as he lay on his bed and composed himself to sleep, he found himself passing in review before his mind's eye stories which he thought he had long forgotten, of impious and daring mortals who had defied the unwritten laws which protected ancient fanes and fairy haunts, and had, as a consequence, fearful punishments meted out to them at the hands of unseen but implacable enemies.

Of course, if he knew for certain—at least so he reasoned—that the field in question was really portion of an old burial ground he would never disturb a single sod of its surface, but it was only surmise to say it was; just because there was a *moat** on the other side of the road. The road separated his field

* *Moat* = A rath.

from the moat, and there could be no connection—and reasoning thus he fell asleep.

The following morning he visited the “three-cornered field”—a piece of property he had acquired by purchase some years previously—and having inspected it, as if he had never seen it before, he crossed the road to the fairy moat, and subjected it to a similar examination.

Whatever he observed evidently supplied him with mental food for the day, for it was noticed by many that he was more or less abstracted up to the time of nightfall, when he slipped out from his shop and disappeared in the deepening shadows without a word of explanation to some early customers who had come in.

Charlie had waited for night so that he might be able to visit Father MacGowan unobserved of the villagers, who, doubtless, would be curious to know why he visited the priest, and as Charlie Dignam’s visit was for the purpose of obtaining advice with reference to his projected tillage, he wished to preserve the reason a secret.

He had had a rupture with the Church before, and as he was a bit hazy with regard to the relations between the power ecclesiastical and ancient burial-places, Christian or pagan, as the case might be, he determined not to risk losing Father MacGowan’s friendship a second time, and so he consulted him.

Father MacGowan’s advice lifted up

Charlie's heart, and the "three-cornered field" was doomed to the plough forthwith.

"There is no proof of the field ever having been used as a burial-place," the priest had said, "and as for the fairies you've hinted at, why, surely, a man of your intelligence does not believe in such things. Plough and sow it by all means, Charlie, and I hope you'll have a good crop."

A week or two later the "three-cornered field" had lost the verdant hue it had worn for generations, and now held in its brown bosom the seed of what Charlie Dignam confidently asserted would be the "best crop of oats in the parish, or the next year to it."

Several of the neighbours had shaken their heads solemnly when they witnessed the ploughing of the field, and put more fervour than usual into the greeting, "God bless your work," as they passed within hail of the ploughman, while others, who thought it nothing short of blasphemy to use the salutation, passed silently along, or else contented themselves with a simple "good morra."

Opinions in Shanwalla were varied as to what the result would be, and Joe M'Grath, it was asserted, had given it as his, that the oats would be sure to rot in the ground.

This came to Charlie Dignam's ears, and though he laughed the statement to scorn, and expressed the belief that Joe was "a terrible ould bladdher," he nevertheless paid one or two surreptitious visits to the "three-cornered

field " at the peep o' day to find if the seeds therein had begun to germinate.

The weeks passed, and long lines of tender green shoots in Dignam's "three-cornered field" proclaimed Joe M'Grath a false prophet, and gave to Charlie Dignam an air of arrogance which became a continuous insult to those whose advice he had rejected.

Becoming assured that he had done the right thing in tilling a field which already promised a magnificent crop, the proprietor lost no opportunity of vaunting his own wisdom, and even went so far as to make jokes concerning "th' ould pagans that wor berrit there" supplying proper nourishment to the roots of the cereal—though now himself convinced, from the manner in which he saw his crop flourishing, that no supernatural agents had any particular interest in the "three-cornered field."

But there were active spirits in Shanwalla in those days, whose potentiality was not to be defied, and Charlie Dignam was doomed to be punished for his temerity.

The first visitation came in the shape of Larry Dewaney's donkey.

Larry was a quiet little man, who resided about half a mile from Shanwalla, and eked out a livelihood by following the profession known as higgling.

His donkey, like himself, was well-behaved in general, and how he became imbued with and carried out the idea of getting into

Charlie Dignam's well-fenced and jealously-guarded "three-cornered field" was ever a mystery to Larry. There were others, however, who could have explained it.

One night, after closing time, some of Charlie Dignam's customers returned to the publichouse, and, speaking through the key-hole, as the door would not be opened to them, informed the proprietor that there was "somethin' not right" in his field.

"Houl' aisy, 'till I go an' see what it is," said Charlie, as he undid the bolts. "I'll be wid yiz in a minit, boys."

Armed with a stick, Charlie issued forth and joined the group which awaited him on the street.

"What's in th' field?" was his first question, rather fiercely.

"I dunno'," said Patsey Hogan, "but Red Mick says he saw him plain enough, an' that it's aither the divil or a *phooka*."*

"Where's Red Mick?" was Charlie's next query.

"Gone home wid th' life nearly frightened out ov him."

"Did anywan else see what's in th' field?" asked Dignam, with the fierce note dying in his voice.

"I saw it meself," said the thatcher, "but it's too dark to see it right, an' I didn't like to go near it."

"Come on," said Charlie, with an assump-

* *Phooka* = The fairy horse,

tion of bravery, "we'll soon see what it is," and onwards he marched, accompanied by the group.

As the moon, which was in its last quarter, had not yet risen, there was not sufficient light to see with any distinctness for more than a half dozen yards or thereabouts, and so, when Charlie Dignam and his followers arrived at the gate of the "three-cornered field" (which, by the way, he found, as usual, securely locked), they peered in vain through the bars for a glimpse of the mysterious intruder.

At the sight of the securely-locked gate Charlie felt some slight misgiving as to the character of the trespasser, because the fences on all sides of the field were in such perfect order that it would be impossible for any animal larger than a dog to obtain access to the field, except by some extraordinary means.

So as he unlocked the gate and allowed it to swing wide he fortified himself with a little dash of piety in the invitation, "Come on, boys, an' in th' name o' God we'll find out what's in th' field," saying which he strode bravely forward for a few yards, and then, finding himself unaccompanied by the group, he gradually slackened his pace, and eventually came to a standstill at a point from which he could still discern the little group in the gateway.

"Are yiz not goin' to come an' give me

a hand?" asked Charlie, addressing those who lingered behind.

"Troth, I wouldn't walk round the field this minit for five shillin's after what Red Mick saw," said Patsey Hogan, protestingly.

"No wan thinks you would," said Charlie, sarcastically, "yeh wor always afeerd ov your own shadda, but some o' th' other boys there won't be afeerd to come," and Charlie mentioned one or two names, with the result that he procured half a dozen more or less sincere volunteers.

The group at once proceeded to move in distended order across the field, Charlie taking the precaution of muttering a prayer for his own safety in case the visitant were a supernatural one, as well as taking up his position as near as possible to the centre of the line of searchers.

More than half the field was unsuccessfully perambulated by the searchers, and Dignam was beginning to think that after all there was no intruder, supernatural or otherwise, in his field, when suddenly Larry Dempsey, who was some little distance in front of the others, was heard to say, "Hist! I think I heerd somethin'."

"What was it?" someone queried anxiously.

"Somethin' like a sigh," answered Larry in a loud whisper.

Little Patsey Kelly, whose curiosity had impelled him to follow the group, upon hear-

ing this decided not to wait for the denouement, and at once commenced making a bee-line for the gate at his best pace.

Unfortunately for Patsey, this line was through a portion of the field which had not been examined, and, still more unfortunately, it ran directly across the spot where Larry Dewaney's donkey was resting, and, doubtless, cudgelling his brain as to why Red Mick and several other neighbours with whom he was acquainted had bodily lifted him over the hedge into Charlie Dignam's field.

His train of thought was interrupted by a violent concussion—Patsey Kelly, to wit, making his bee-line with head in air—and, thinking he was again attacked by Red Mick and his gang, the donkey jumped to his feet and gave vent to a roar that would have done credit to an animal ten times his size.

In this he was ably seconded by Patsey Kelly, who was almost frightened out of his wits, and energetically supported—though in a different strain—by Charlie Dignam, who became as bold as a lion on discovering the nature of his visitant, and as fierce as a tiger in his invectives against Larry Dewaney and his “maraudin’ ass.”

Charlie led the donkey from the field, and instead of turning him loose upon the road, as it was thought he would, he took the animal home and shut him up in the yard in order to hold him as evidence of the offence committed.

Early next morning Larry Dewaney was

informed of the capture and detention of his donkey, and having come to the village sought advice as to what should be done.

"I darn't face Charlie," said the little higgler, "he'd be sure to leather the life out o' me."

"Lave th' ass where he is for a day or two," said Brian Boylan, to whom it was he spoke, "Charlie'll let him out as soon as he cools down."

"But I want him to-day to do me rounds. What'll I do at all, at all?"

"I'll tell you what," said Brian, "wan or two ov us 'll go in an' get Charlie talkin' in th' shop, an' you can slip into th' yard an' stale out th' ass, an' hook it as fast as ye can."

The plot proved successful to a certain point.

Brian Boylan an' his fellow-conspirators, having engaged Charlie Dignam in conversation for a length of time sufficient to give Larry Dewaney the needed chance, were about leaving the publichouse when little Patsey Kelly came rushing in.

"I kem in to tell you, Mr. Dignam, that Larry Dewaney is afther stalin' th' ass out, an' he is away up th' road wid him now."

Charlie waited to hear no more, and, snatching from off a peg a stout stick which hung therefrom by its crook, started in pursuit of the daring higgler, closely attended the while by a good proportion of the population of Shanwalla.

Larry Dewaney had covered a good part of his homeward road, and was already congratulating himself on the manner in which he had outwitted Charlie Dignam, when, happening to hear hurried footsteps in his rear, he turned, to see the latter individual swooping down upon him with every indication of anger on his countenance.

Now, Larry Dewaney, not being a pugilistic individual, responded to Charlie's invitation, "Wait till I ketch a houl't o' yeh," by doing exactly the opposite, and started sprinting in such a manner that he aroused the spirit of emulation in the donkey, that intelligent animal immediately increasing his velocity to a rate which kept him a length or two ahead of his master, and therefore safe from the first ministrations of Dignam's stick.

Larry Dewaney had no hope of being able to outrun his pursuer, and in the first moment of the chase he felt he could not escape except by some lucky chance.

For a couple of hundred yards a wide ditch ran along the roadway on one side—such a ditch as was only negotiable by an active young man—a description not applicable to the pursued or pursuer in this instance.

Across this ditch a single plank had been placed lately for the convenience of the owner of the adjoining field, and Larry felt if he could reach the plank in time and cross over, and then pull it after him, he would be safe for the time being.

Charlie, as if aware of this intention, redoubled his exertions, and was within a yard or two of his quarry when the plank was reached.

Not caring to rush upon the rather narrow plank after the higgler, Charlie Dignam suddenly shot out his walking-stick, and succeeded in hooking Dewaney by the coat-collar when the latter was some little distance advanced upon the plank.

Whatever Dignam's intentions were, the result was evidently different to his anticipations.

There was a momentary pause on the part of Larry Dewaney, as, feeling his career checked, he turned half round in the effort to free himself.

The action caused him to lose his balance, and, feeling he was about to fall into the ditch, he clutched wildly at the object which most readily presented itself.

This, however, proved insufficient to prevent his fall, and the object in question being Charlie Dignam's stick, it followed, as that gentleman was holding on to the other end, that he also accompanied the stick and Larry Dewaney to the bottom of the ditch, in which unromantic spot the chase ingloriously terminated.

Charlie's first impulse was to pummel Dewaney unmercifully, but seeing that he was up to his knees in water and mud, he

deemed it better to get on firmer ground, and so clambered out.

The little higgler, however, evinced no desire to leave what he considered a position of safety, and remained below gazing up at his pursuer from underneath an overhanging bush, much in the style of a hunted water-fowl.

"Come up owre that, ye mane little shoe-boy, antil I pay yeh off for you're thricks."

A groan emanated from the ditch bottom.

"What are yeh gruntin' about?" demanded Dignam. "I'll gie yeh somethin' to grunt for when I get a houl't o' yeh."

"Och! och! I'm nearly kilt; me arm's broke, an' I think me neck is half broke, too!" and Dewaney groaned piteously.

Charlie's heart was touched with pity, and, turning to some of those who had followed the chase, he said, "Pull him out, boys, I think the poor little divil is well enough punished. I'll not bate him, but if I lay hands on that thievin' ass I'll make him jump."

"Why, then, Mr. Dignam," asked the voice from the ditch, "now that I've time might I ask what's the raisin you want to bate aither me or th' ass?"

"How much asthray y' are!" said Charlie. "D'ye mane to say yeh don't know that he was in me field ov oats last night, an' nearly ate the half o' it?"

"You're not in airnist, are yeh, Mr. Dignam?"

"I never was more in airnist in me life."

"Well! well! well!" ejaculated the higgler, in sorrowful tones, "an' do you think, Mr. Dignam, it'll do any harm to th' poor baste?"

There was an outburst of laughter when Dewaney asked this question, and Charlie Dignam, fearing he was becoming an object of ridicule, at once retraced his steps, while the higgler was pulled out of the ditch not much the worse for his tumble.

The amount of damage done by Larry Dewaney's donkey was not sufficient to show any appreciable diminution of the crop in the "three-cornered field," which in the fulness of time ripened and was reaped.

No further incident beyond that chronicled had occurred in connection with the field, and Charlie Dignam, as a consequence, was pleased with his crop, and never tired of making scornful allusions to certain advices he had received concerning the field.

"How many stooks did yeh say yeh have in it?" asked Brian Boylan the day following that on which the crop of the "three-cornered field" had been stoked.

"Eighty-wan," said Charlie, proudly.

"Yeh must be out in yer count, for Larry Dempsey an' meself wor countin' them about an hour ago, an' we only med eighty."

"Yiz must a' missed wan, Brian; I counted them twice over meself."

"Like enough," said the blacksmith, with a satisfied air, and the conversation concluded.

An hour or two afterwards Charlie Dignam might have been seen in the "three-cornered field" carefully counting his stooks, and having walked through the field once or twice and made sundry notches in a piece of stick, he was forced to the conclusion that there were only eighty stooks in the field.

"That's quare," soliloquised Charlie, "I could a'taken me oath there was eighty-wan yistherda' evenin'."

Next morning, on meeting Brian Boylan, Charlie said, "You wor right, Brian, there's only eighty stooks in the "three-cornered field."

Brian scratched his head and looked extremely puzzled, and then, seeming to find his voice, broke out with—

"Well, by the mossy diamon's, this bates cock-fightin'."

"What does?" asked Charlie, wonderingly.

"Why, only half an hour ago I was tellin' Joe M'Grath about you countin' eighty-wan stooks, and he laughed an' said you ought to be sent to school again to larn how to count."

"Well, says I, wan wasn't much for him to miss, an' he in a hurry, maybe, says I, an' I

tould him that Larry Dempsey and meself med eighty on th' count."

"With that he laughed more. 'Troth, then, the penny a week was lost on you an' Larry as well,' says he, 'for I'm just afther countin' them for amusement, an' I'd swear it on a sack o' Bibles that there's only seventy-eight stooks in the field.' An' now the question is, Misther Dignam, are you right an' are we wrong, or are we right an' are you wrong, or are we all wrong together? I suppose you didn't bring any o' th' stooks home?"

"How could I bring them home," said Dignam, "when I've no place to put them?"

"That's a fact!" acquiesced Brian, and relapsed into silence.

"I'll go up this morthial minit an' count them again," said Charlie, with sudden determination; "I've me own opinion about th' stooks."

"An' Joe M'Grath has his," said Brian, quietly.

"An' what might that be?"

"The fairies, he says it is," answered Brian, in a voice little above a whisper.

Charlie's expression changed a little as if he were in a state of uncertainty, but gradually he put off the air of indecision, and exclaiming, "I'll fairy them! there's somewan stalin' me oats," set off at a rapid pace in the direction of the "three-cornered field."

"Seventy-eight! divil resave the wan

more," he muttered, when he had finished a careful computation. "Three stooks ov oats gone holus-bolus, but, houl' aisy awhile, an' be me faith, I'll make somewan lepp or me name's not Charlie Dignam."

A careful search along the fences failed to reveal any indications of the abstraction of the stooks, and this was rather puzzling, as it would have been almost impossible to remove even a single sheaf without leaving a stray straw in the hedge or by the gateway.

Joe M'Grath came to his workshop door as Charlie went homewards, and saluted the latter with the question:—

"Well, an' what did ye make o' them?"

"More nor I'll ever make o'them again, I'm thinkin', if the robber isn't caught soon."

"I wouldn't call them robbers, if I was you," said Joe, in a warning voice, "they'll only punish you the more."

"Who?" queried Charlie.

"The good people, ov coorse! who else could it be that id take away three stooks of oats out ov a well-fenced field 'ithout lavin' a *mot** o' straw on briar or bramble?"

"Good or bad people," said Charlie, "it'll be the worse for them if they don't lave my oats alone, if I ketch them."

Joe put up his hands in horror, exclaiming, "Oh, you oughn't to talk like that; above all don't threaten them, you never know what might happen."

* *Mot* = Single straw.

“ I’ll engage I know what’ll happen to the man that’s stalin’ me oats if I wance clap me eyes on him when he’s thievin’,” saying which Charlie resumed his homeward walk.

The news soon spread through the village that something had gone wrong with Charlie Dignam’s crop of oats, and brains and tongues went to work so industriously that various stories of the particular manner in which a fairy host came each night for a stook were whispered from one to another of the gossoons of Shanwalla.

Ere the day had finished almost every small boy in the village, capable of performing the task, had stood with others on the top of the moat already alluded to, and counted to his entire satisfaction the seventy-eight stooks which were full in view in the “three-cornered field.”

They sought their beds later on, wondering what fresh story of fairy ravages would astonish their ears in the morning.

Charlie Dignam, however, determined to spend the night in a different manner, and accompanied by Red Mick and Larry Dempsey, whom he hired for the occasion, he set out at dark to keep vigil through the night in the “three-cornered field.”

The night was fine, and there was sufficient light to see every portion of the field from the position which the watchers took up in the shadow of the hedge, and seeing that Charlie had provided some wet refreshments for the

occasion, Red Mick and Larry Dempsey looked forward to having a fairly comfortable night.

The witching hour passed and no intruder appeared upon the scene, and had not Charlie become a little nervous all might have gone well.

A certain half-defined fear haunted him that perhaps he had been too harsh in what he had said concerning the "good people," and if it were really to their agency the disappearance of his corn was attributable, now that he was here to interfere with their proceedings they might be tempted—if they visited the field—to wreak their vengeance upon him in person.

These thoughts engendered in him a strong desire to have recourse to the aforesaid wet refreshments more frequently than was judicious, with the result that soon after midnight the greater portion of the contents of the whiskey bottle found a resting-place in Charlie's stomach.

His two companions, strange to say, instead of trying to dissuade him from his too-frequent intercourse with the bottle, encouraged him to drink more than was in consonance with his usual temperate habits, and soon, despite heroic attempts to keep awake, Charlie Dignam's body gradually assumed an attitude of repose, and his deep breathing proclaimed that sleep, in conjunction with the spirit, had overcome him.

"Now's our time," whispered Larry to his companion, and in a few moments the faithful henchmen upset one of the stooks, and catching up the sheaves which had composed it quickly joined them to several other stooks in such a skilful manner that the additions were hardly noticeable.

One sheaf, however, was retained by Red Mick for a purpose of his own, and after a few moments' whispering, the pair returned to where they had left their sleeping companion, and took up their places by his side.

"Now, then, for the fun," said Red Mick, as he poised the sheaf over the prostrate form of the sleeper.

"Wait a minit," said Larry; "just see if there's anything left in the bottle afore you waken him."

The bottle was found, and the two worthies helped themselves to what remained, having done which Red Mick brought the sheaf down with all his strength on the body of Charlie Dignam.

Charlie started from his sleep with a yell, to find Larry Dempsey grovelling upon the ground beside him and Red Mick trying to burst through the hedge, both of them shouting like madmen.

"God bless an' save us, boys! what's wrong wid yez?" was Charlie's first ejaculation.

"Oh! oh! oh!" shouted Red Mick, as he struggled among the thorns, "I'm desthroyed for ever an' ever!"

"Lord a' mercy on us all!" groaned Larry Dempsey, as he writhed and kicked upon the ground, "we're done for entirely."

A feeling of terror crept over Charlie as he observed the state of his companions, and starting to his feet he caught hold of Larry Dempsey with the idea of assisting him to rise.

"Oh! oh! oh!" groaned that individual, as a fresh spasm seemed to seize him, "don't touch me, Misther Divil, an' I'll never come near this field again."

The beads of perspiration stood out upon Charlie's forehead, and his legs grew weak at the knees as the idea forced itself upon his clouded brain that some demonstration of supernatural displeasure had been made against them.

"Is that you spakin', Misther Dignam?" said Red Mick, in a strangely agitated voice, as he desisted for a moment from his apparently frantic attempts to get through the hedge.

"Ov coorse it is, Mick, who else would it be?"

"Glory be to goodness, then, you're not kilt!"

"What 'id kill me?"

"Is it gone?" queried Larry Dempsey, in a faint voice, as he ventured to raise his head.

"Is what gone?" asked Charlie, in quavering tones, "for the love o' Heaven tell us what's wrong wid yez."

"Oh, Misther Dignam!" groaned Larry.

"Oh, Misther Dignam!" repeated his accomplice in a like manner.

"There's no wan here but myself," said Charlie, in tones which he meant to be reassuring, but which sounded most dismal in his own ears. "Did yez see anything?"

"See anything," murmured Red Mick, in an awe-stricken voice, as he extricated himself from the hedge. "I saw more nor ever I want to see again anyway."

"Let us get out o' this unlucky field," said Larry Dempsey, as he rose to his feet, "or we'll never ait another bit o' th' world's bread."

"Wait for me, Larry," said Red Mick, as he sprang to his side; "I wouldn't stop here another minit for all th' goold in the world." And immediately the pair started running towards the gate.

"Houl' aisy, boys, houl' aisy!" shouted the now thoroughly terrified Charlie, "sure yez wouldn't run away an' lave me to be murdered?"

"Come on at wanst, then, for if they give you another clout it's at your wake we'll be before we're a day oulder."

A few seconds sufficed to reach the gate, which, in their hurry, they scrambled across as best they could, and soon three pairs of feet were beating a merry tattoo on the roadway as the watchers retreated pell-mell towards the village, never halting for a moment in their

flight till they came opposite Joe M'Grath's workshop, where Red Mick stumbled and fell.

There was a light in Joe M'Grath's window—that industrious individual being evidently working into the small hours of the morning in order to finish some urgent piece of work.

“Get up, Mick,” whispered Charlie to his prostrate companion.

“Oh! I'm not able,” was the response, in a faint voice, “me legs is paralysed, I think. Run into Joe M'Grath, Larry, an' ax him to bring me out a dhrink o' wather; I'm wake all over.”

Larry Dempsey obeyed with rather suspicious alacrity, and in a few seconds the harness-maker was on the scene.

These few moments, however, were sufficient for Charlie to learn from Red Mick that he had seen a whole procession of “fairies an' other sperrits comin' through the ‘three-cornered field,’ an' pickin' up a stook as if it wor no more nor a feather, an' wan big black fella,” he concluded, “wid red eyes an' a tail an' horns, took hould o' wan o' th' shaves an' threw it at you wid terrible vinom.”

The last vestiges of Charlie Dignam's fortitude utterly broke down, and casting all fear of Joe M'Grath's ridicule to the winds, he lost no time in taking advantage of Joe's invitation to come in an' have a rest in the workshop.

Finding themselves safe under a friendly roof the spirits of Larry Dempsey and Red

Mick soon revived, and after a somewhat longer period Charlie Dignam grew calm enough to listen to the highly sensational description which his two companions gave of the uncanny sight which they declared they had witnessed.

Joe M'Grath fixed his gaze upon Charlie, and said in a pitying manner—"Me poor man, 'twas you had the narra escape; I tould you all along it wasn't lucky to intherfaire wid the 'three-cornered field.'"

"I'll never say a word against the fairies again, Joe," said Charlie, in the humblest of tones. "Me chest is sore now where that divil sthruke me wid the sheaf, an' I'm doubtin' if I'll ever over it, for a blow from wan o' them sort is sure to be unlucky."

"You'll be all right, please God," said Joe, reassuringly; "go home now an' say your prayers rale devout, an' go to bed like a Christian, an' make a firm resolution that you'll do what you can to make amindmint for goin' conthrary to the sperits o' them that's dead an' gone."

"There's a lot o' sense in what you say, Joe. an' I'll go home at wanst if you'll just see me to the dure."

Joe escorted Charlie to his residence, and on the way gave him several further pieces of advice with regard to the proper treatment of fairies, and finally parted from him at the door, promising to call next day and have a

chat over the matter, pledging himself in the meanwhile to keep the incident secret.

Faithful to his promise, Joe called on Charlie early on the following morning and corroborated the witnesses of the preceding night's adventure by informing the unlucky publican that he had been up to count the stooks in the "three-cornered field," and found there were only seventy-six to be seen, and no trace of any having been taken away beyond the fact that there was a single sheaf lying close to the hedge.

"That must be th' wan I was sthruck wid," said Charlie, in dismal tones, "wasn't I th' unfortunate man to go next or near the place last night."

"Troth, you may well say it," acquiesced Joe, in his most solemn manner. "I wouldn't be in your shoes for anything."

"What am I to do, at all, at all?" asked Charlie, despairingly.

"Watch an' pray, Misther Dignam! watch an' pray!" said Joe, who on occasions could give short scriptural quotations.

"Troth, then," said Charlie, with a smile, "if me prayin' is no betther nor me watchin' I'm likely to lose all me oats."

"Well, I'd wait another night or two, an' see how things go on; maybe th' good people are satisfied afther givin' yeh that polthogue on th' chest."

No further watch was kept in the three-cornered field," and on the succeeding night

yet another stook disappeared as mysteriously as the former ones.

Then Charlie conceived the idea of again appealing to Father MacGowan on the subject of the "three-cornered field," and he immediately waited upon the pastor of Shanwalla.

The good priest listened patiently while his troubled parishioner explained the calamities which had befallen him.

"You're sorry, you say, you did not take Joe M'Grath's advice. Did he advise you not to till the field?" asked Father MacGowan.

"He did, yer reverence, an' we nearly fell out about it."

"And you say you took Red Mick and Larry Dempsey to help you watch."

"Yis, yer reverence!"

"Hum!" ejaculated Father MacGowan, as a peculiar expression crossed his countenance. "An' they saw fairies?" he continued, interrogatively.

"They did, yer reverence, an' they wor nearly frightened out o' their lives."

"I saw both of them yesterday, and they did not appear much the worse for their experience," observed the priest.

Father MacGowan looked at his watch, pondered for a few moments, and then, turning to Charlie, said, "I'll go and have a look at the field at once and see what traces the fairies have left of their visit."

Charlie accompanied the priest, and the

field having been duly inspected, Father MacGowan said quietly, "I think you may go home, Charlie, and trouble no further about this business. I'll guarantee to lay the troublesome spirits."

On the afternoon of the same day the parish priest called into Joe M'Grath's workshop and said, "I want to see you, Larry Dempsey, and Red Mick, as you call that ne'er-do-well, at my house this evening when you have finished work. Nine o'clock will suit. You can tell the other two to come, and see that you don't fail to attend."

Father MacGowan preached a sermon to a congregation of three at nine o'clock in his little parlour.

What the particular text was the members of the congregation were too confused to remember, but when eventually the trio left the priest's house those who composed it—Joe M'Grath, Larry Dempsey, and Red Mick—to wit—slunk away after the manner of whipped curs.

Nor did they seek their respective homes, though the hour was late. They directed their footsteps to the "three-cornered field" instead, where, after fifteen minutes' silent work, they restored the sheaves previously distributed to their original positions, and thereby the number of stooks to what it was on the day Charlie Dignam made his first computation.

Next morning the news was borne to

Charlie that there were eighty-one stooks in the field.

"Glory be to God!" he ejaculated, "isn't Father MacGowan a great priest. I'll go up an' thank him this minit."

Soon after, Charlie was in the presence of Father MacGowan, thanking him profusely for the miracle he had wrought.

The priest smiled and said, "Some months ago you declared your unbelief in fairies, I think."

"I did, yer reverence," said Dignam, shamefacedly, "but I was forced to change me mind sence."

"Well, the sooner you change your mind again the better it will be for the peace of it."

"I was misdoubtin' about them stalin' th' stooks till Larry an' Mick saw them, an' then I couldn't but believe in th' fairies, 'specially afther the clout I got."

"This much I can tell you, Charlie! 'Twas no fairy hand which hurled the sheaf at you, and, further, your stooks were not stolen."

Charlie Dignam opened his mouth in wonder.

"Some of your neighbours," continued Father MacGowan, "wishing, perhaps, to improve their arithmetical knowledge, conceived the idea of holding a night-school in the 'three-cornered field,' where they worked quietly for several nights practising subtraction, division, and addition. The class met

again last night and proved its ability by working back to the original figures."

A light broke in upon the brain of Charlie Dignam.

"God forgive them," he said, "for the throuble an' annoyance they gev meself an' yer reverence."

"Amen," said Father MacGowan.

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